Second Sight

A Novel by DAVID WILLIAMS

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Second Sight

A NOVEL BY

DAVID WILLIAMS

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FOR
MY MOTHER
GOLDIE V. WILLIAMS

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.

—L. P. Hartley
The Go-Between

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Prologue

SOMETHING MOVED in the shadows under the eaves. Jennie paused at the head of the narrow stairwell, looking off into the dimness. She could see nothing. Afternoon light fell through the door of the skylighted studio on her left, illuminating the area near the stairs, but the rest of the attic was unfinished, with only thin slices of sky showing through a slatted air vent at the other end. It was a big house, and a big attic, and she had never explored the unfinished part of it. She had no desire to do so now, even to discover what it was she had heard. A mouse, probably—or her imagination. She hoped it was a mouse. Her imagination had troubled her enough already during the past year, before this move to the country. She turned from the stairs and went into the studio.

Her footsteps echoed in the big, empty space. It was a very large, oblong room, with white plastered walls and bare wood floors. A big skylight slanted down almost to the floor in the north ceiling, a stark block of luminous white set against the darkness on either side. Shadows lingered around the chimney rising up from the fireplace in the living room two stories below and softened every nook and cranny along the walls. With its skylight and slanted ceilings, this room always reminded her of ancient London garrets, or of romantic ateliers in a Paris of long ago. She had always loved attics, ever since the daydreaming days of childhood summers on her grandparents' farm in Ohio, but the emotion she felt here was due to more than that. The real estate broker had said the house was more than a hundred years old—and like all old houses, it seemed to contain still within it all the mysteries of the past.

It was a renovated farmhouse, set on the brow of a hill, the large living-room windows looking down on a lake and the town on the other side that

still bore traces of the resort it had been at the turn of the century. It was that turn-of-the-century quality that intrigued her. Always in houses like this she had seemed able to sense in the air itself the presence of all those who had lived out their lives within it, as if their emotions had seeped into the very walls, remaining forever in the atmosphere of the house even after they were gone. The high-ceilinged bedrooms on the second floor still evoked generations of births and deaths; descending the sweeping staircase into the dining room she felt on the worn railing hands that had glided down it before even her parents were born; spectral nineteenth-century women seemed to hover in the big, solid-walled kitchen, in the cool pantry, in every room—mysterious echoes of a past which, because she would never be able to experience it, seemed all the more lovely and serene.

She went now to stand at the skylight, resting one knee on the lid of the window seat in front of it, looking out across the back yard. The sun had just set; pale reddish light lingered on the woods sloping down to the lake, which was out of sight on the left. A field stretched away to the north; between it and the woods above the lake she could see Summer House Road intermittently through the trees. Now she saw Michael emerge around the corner of the house, pushing a wheelbarrow full of rocks. He put the wheelbarrow down at the edge of the yard. Affectionately, she watched him stoop and bend—tall, graceful, and sandy-haired—placing the rocks around her new flower beds. She was glad he was beginning to like life in the country, even though it meant commuting to work in Manhattan every day. He had grown up in the city, had never lived anywhere else, and only when she convinced him it would make things right again, put an end to that depression and anxiety she had suffered during the past year, had he agreed to move.

She turned back to look at the studio. From behind her, pale light fell in an elongated rectangle down the length of the bare wood floor. She had already made one of the second-floor bedrooms into a study for Michael, but this was to be hers, her off-by-herself room, this romantic studio at the very top of the house. It had been built, according to the real estate broker, by an artist who had lived here at the turn of the century, and it was here that she felt most of all that mysterious and lovely sense of the past. It was there in every part of the room—the rough-hewn beams in the slanted ceilings, the old chimney

reaching up through the peak of the roof, the wide window seat running along beneath the skylight.

She knelt in front of the window seat, lifting the lid to gaze into the dimness inside. It was built right into the wall and was obviously as old as the studio itself. She wondered what that turn-of-the-century artist had stored in it. Canvases? It was certainly big enough. The inner floor was lined with worn linoleum, peeling and curling up at the edges. She seized it by one ragged edge and tugged—and felt the entire floorboard come up in her hands. Beneath it, lying pale and discolored in the dust, were two thick sheets of paper. She lifted them out and held them up to the light, a vague sense of awe stealing over her.

Sketches. Two sketches on paper so old it was yellow with age, brittle and crumbling at the edges. Excitement made her hands begin to tremble. Each sketch showed a woman in a long, white dress with a high collar and long, lacy sleeves. There was no background, nothing to indicate the setting; the woman herself was barely sketched in—a few quick strokes suggesting the outlines of a face, a wide-brimmed hat, hands fading fingerless into the empty expanse of paper—but the dress was very explicitly detailed. It was a summer dress, the kind of dress that made her think of long sunny afternoons, great lawns, gravel pathways stretching endlessly away between trimmed hedges. Long ago, in the twilight of its resort era, dresses like this had been worn in that town across the lake, in that long last bloom of America's innocence, before the onrushing of the twentieth century. And in her hands she held a piece of that time, sketches that must have lain hidden for three-quarters of a century. She rose slowly to her feet, torn between an urge to rush out to show them to Michael and an almost reverent reluctance to disturb the moment. Because there could be no doubt that they were the work of that turn-of-the-century artist. Hers were quite possibly the first hands to touch them since his. Holding them to her breast, surrounded by the hush of evening, she turned in a slow full circle, examining every nebulous shadow along the walls, and the big empty studio came alive for her now in a way it hadn't before, as if in the sketches she held some mysterious link back to the man who had put pencil to this very paper, somewhere under these slanted ceilings, before this large luminous skylight, on a day as real to him as this day was to her.

His presence seemed almost alive in the room.

1

THE DRESS SEEMED TO FLOAT down around her head, obscuring her vision in a soft blur of translucent white; then she felt Roberta pull it down over her shoulders, and she could see again: the familiar disorganization of Roberta's workroom, the racks of clothing in various stages of alteration and repair, the dressmaker's mannequin, the big worktable scattered with spare zippers, boxes of buttons, scissors and swatches. Outside, the skyline of upper Manhattan shimmered in the late spring haze.

"Now, if you had lived in those days," Roberta said, "you'd have had a ladies' maid to help you do this."

Jennie shook her hair free, sliding her arms into the long, flaring sleeves. "And a downstairs maid and a cook and a butler, too, I suppose. If I'd lived then, I'd probably have been a maid myself."

"Oh, no. Some rich, handsome man would have plucked you out of the crowd and married you." Roberta tugged at the back of the dress, aligning the waist.

Jennie braced herself against the pull, self-consciously aware of the lacy collar soft against her throat, the ruffled cuffs circling her wrists. The dress felt light as air. It reached in one long startlingly white swath to the floor, seeming to draw toward it all the light in the room. She felt Roberta's fingers begin working their way up the tiny buttons in back.

"It's funny," she said. "It makes me feel different." She bent her head and lifted her hair to one side so that Roberta could reach the buttons at the nape of her neck. "I can almost *feel* how it must have been to be a woman then. Isn't that strange?"

"Mmm-hmmn," Roberta said, intent on the buttons. "You'll have to wear your hair up with it. That was the fashion then."

"I can't believe what a good job you've done just from the sketches."

"It was a labor of love," Roberta said. "It's not often I get a chance to work on something like this. Which reminds me—I showed the sketches to that friend of mine, Rosalie. You remember I told you about her, does costumes for John Cox downtown? She said it's a dress from the eighteen-nineties. Said there's a dress almost exactly like it in the Metropolitan Museum. In their costume collection."

"The eighteen-nineties." Jennie looked down at the long, enchanting lines of the dress, thinking of the artist who had made the sketches. Placing him definitely in the nineteenth century made them seem even more poignant and romantic. She wondered if they were preliminary sketches for a later painting, if somewhere in the world, in some museum, there was a painting based on sketches done in her own attic, by a man who had lived there more than three-quarters of a century ago. She had a sad intuition that there was no painting, anywhere—that he had never become successful. If he had, the real estate broker would surely have mentioned his name. It was possible that nothing else of his work had survived, that she possessed in the sketches the last remnants of work from a man who had never achieved the dream that, to judge from the studio, had meant very much to him.

Roberta turned her around and circled her waist with the belt. "You wear it tied in front like this, with the tails hanging down." She tied the belt in a bow and stepped back. "Beautiful. It's a perfect fit. Here, take a look at yourself in the mirror."

Jennie hesitated. "No. No, I want to wait. I want to wait until I get home."

Roberta smiled. "A special occasion, is that it?"

"I guess you could say that." Jennie lifted the skirts in one hand, as she had seen similarly dressed women do in films and photos, and began walking down the length of the room, feeling the lush folds of lace flowing around her legs. The dress even seemed to make her walk differently—her shoulders back, her head held erect by the high collar, the hand holding the skirts up at one side—all giving her again that strange sensation of actually experiencing what it was to be a woman in the eighteen-nineties. She turned at the window, looking

back toward Roberta, and her emotion seemed to give even the room a different quality, making everything seem somehow more real, more there, the way the huge movie screen deepened the colors and shadows of a room in a film, so that she felt almost like a character in a film herself. She was aware of the white light from the window falling through the white of the dress, setting her off from everything around her, surrounding her like an aura from head to foot.

Even Roberta seemed to have caught the spell. "You look enchanted," she said. "Even a little uncanny. If I didn't know you, coming in here and seeing you in that light, I'd think you were a ghost, a beautiful ghost come back to haunt somebody."

"You don't think it's too . . . pretentious? For a garden party, I mean?"

"It's perfect for a garden party. Are you going to get a parasol? A dress like that, you should have a parasol."

"Do you think I could get one?"

"Ought to somewhere. In New York you can get anything. You should have a cameo, too. They always wore a cameo right at the base of the throat."

Jennie crossed the room again, feeling the light receding at her back, the full lacy sleeves rustling against her sides, the frothy skirts sweeping along the floor. She couldn't get over how the dress made her feel. She was reluctant to take it off, to lose the feeling it gave her, but it was getting on toward noon. She undid the belt and turned, so that Roberta could get at the buttons. "I suppose you'd better help me out of it. I have a lunch date at twelve-thirty."

"You'll be surprised when you see yourself in the mirror," Roberta said, unfastening the buttons. "With the sleeves and collar finished, it looks a lot different from when you were here for the first fitting. You'll have to give me a picture of you in it."

"I'll send you one the first chance I get," Jennie said.

She changed back into her street clothes and wrote out a check while Roberta cushioned the dress in soft tissue and folded it into a large cardboard box. Roberta accompanied her to the door and unfastened the chain-lock.

"Your husband seen the sketches? He knows what it looks like?"

"He's seen the sketches. I don't know if he can imagine how it will look."

"He'll love this dress. Take my word for it."

"Thank you, Roberta." Jennie suddenly snapped her fingers and went back into the workroom.

"What is it?" Roberta said.

"My sketches," Jennie said, retrieving them from the cluttered worktable. "I want to keep those. I think they're very special."

• • •

She had lunch with Beverly at Prospero's, on East 52nd Street. She was early and was seated at a corner table from which she could see through the slatted divider to the bar and the cloakroom near the door. Beverly breezed in at a quarter to one, wearing a chic tweed suit and a scarlet blouse. She pressed a chilled cheek to Jennie's and sat down, pulling off her gloves.

"Boy, it may be spring out there, but that wind feels like football weather. How are you, kid? You look good. The country must be agreeing with you. Did you order drinks?"

"Bloody Marys. That's still your drink, isn't it?"

"Absolutely. Perfect for the weather, too. How was the new garden party dress? Finished?"

"It's in a box in the cloakroom. Wait till you see it—it's beautiful."

The drinks arrived, two Bloody Marys in large goblet glasses. Beverly stirred, tapped the swizzle stick dry against the rim, and raised the glass in a toast. "To your new life in the country."

"Thank you," Jennie said.

"So how are you really? No more down-in-the-dumps? No more headaches? This past year you could have taken the prize for grumpiness, kid."

"I know. I was a real pain, wasn't I?"

"Understandable, given the circumstances. And—speaking of the circumstances—how's Michael?"

"Michael's fine."

Beverly eyed her sympathetically. "It's working out, huh?"

"I think so. I think it's just what we needed." She was a little sorry now that she had made this lunch date. Beverly had been her best friend ever since they had shared an apartment five years ago, but you could always count on her to pursue an unpleasant subject. She remembered Roberta's remark about

Michael liking the dress and wondered if that was why she had had it made. She remembered a girl in college who had spent a small fortune on clothes trying to attract a boy she was wildly infatuated with. She didn't like to think she was like that. But there was a grain of truth there. It was a natural reaction, she supposed: to try to make yourself more attractive to your husband when you've discovered he's been unfaithful.

The maître d' took their orders, collected the menus and departed. Beverly opened a new pack of Trues and lit one with a slim gas lighter.

"I meant to ask you. Did you ever find out who the woman was? What kind of thing it was?"

"I don't want to know. It's over now, and I don't want to think about it."

"Men," Beverly said. "Such schmucks."

"How are you and Don getting along?"

"We see each other once a week or so. We have a good time together—the man knows his place. Why?"

"I have a vested interest. After all, he's Michael's friend, and I introduced you. When are you getting married?"

"Kid, I may never get married."

"You always say that, but I never believe you."

"Why should I get married? I have a career, I enjoy my work, I have a good time. And the marriages I see around me hardly make the institution look attractive."

Jennie winced.

"Sorry, kid. I didn't mean you. But how many marriages do you know that are any good? I like my life just the way it is."

Jennie had heard all this before. Beverly wasn't the only friend she had in the city who seemed to mistrust the idea of marriage. And it wasn't only marriage; they seemed to shy away from a serious relationship of any kind, as if they had lost faith in any workable commitment to the opposite sex. She couldn't understand it. She couldn't imagine being involved on a casual basis, relating from an emotional distance, perennial strangers.

"You'll get married some day," she said.

Beverly smiled. "You're a romantic, kid. You're a throwback to an earlier age."

The waiter brought their orders, and while they ate, Beverly brought her up on all the gossip. Jocelyn, the third girl in the apartment they had shared five years before, had just separated from her husband but was doing well in the ad agency she worked for; Gary, a guy Beverly had dated for a while before Don, had come out of the closet and was living with his lover on the Upper West Side; Beverly's magazine was planning a spinoff devoted to the inside world of show business, and she had a chance at the top slot. Jennie listened, content to let Beverly fill the silence with that verbal energy she had always been somewhat in awe of. With her ambition and her model's looks, Beverly was the quintessential New York woman, the kind Jennie had finally decided she wasn't. She didn't have that driving ambition; she wasn't good at the kind of politics it took to get ahead. She had begun to realize that after only a year in the city, and at the time she had been so unhappy she had considered leaving. Then, of course, she had met Michael.

After lunch, Beverly walked her to Second Avenue, where she hailed a cab to take her to Grand Central.

"When do I get to see you in your new dress?" Beverly said, holding the door open for her.

"I'll wear it when you and Don come up. Can you make it next Sunday? That's a week from tomorrow."

"It's a date. That ought to prove how much I care about you, kid, if I give up a weekend at Fire Island to spend it up in farm country."

"You have a house in Fair Harbor again?"

"For the whole summer. You get tired of hayfields and cows, come spend a few weekends at the beach."

"Okay," Jennie said, "I will."

The train home took only a little more than an hour; by four o'clock she was in her upstairs bedroom, sitting at her dressing table, fixing her hair into an upsweep atop her head. The drapes at all the windows except one were closed against the sun. The light falling through that one window created a warm afternoon feeling in the room. From downstairs came an occasional outburst of sound from the living room, where Michael was watching a ball game on TV. She ducked her head to place a barrette in her hair, looking up through her lashes at her reflection. A faint flutter of anticipation danced in

her stomach, an excitement heightened by her impatience. In the mirror she could see the dress laid out long and beautiful on the bed. She tucked the last hairpin into place, gave herself a quick examination in the mirror, and went to slip it on. Fastening the tiny buttons up the back was awkward and difficult, but only when she had fumbled each one into its loop did she step to the full-length mirror by the door.

She was entranced: she hardly recognized herself. The high lacy collar lifted her chin and made her neck seem longer. The sleeves ballooned slightly outward to just below the elbow, then tucked into long slim cuffs that ended in ruffles about the base of the hands. A wide, ruffle-edged band of lace ran up the center of the bodice from waist to neck; all that white seemed to turn her hair from its natural dark blonde to a kind of burnished gold. Light fell through the window at her feet so that she seemed to rise up out of it, a slim, almost luminescent figure in the dimness of the room, reminding her of all those romantic Impressionist paintings—Degas's dancers like white flowers in the shadowy light of the studio, or Monet's *Cliff Walk:* two women in just such dresses as this, standing under a parasol in a breeze on a bluff overlooking the sea.

The sight of herself so changed brought a confused rush of feelings welling up in her: happiness, excitement, eagerness, a yearning ache she hadn't felt so strongly since she was a girl. Somehow just wearing the dress unlocked all those emotions inside her. She had never looked more beautiful and romantic in her life. Eagerly, she picked up her skirts and went out and down the hall toward the stairs.

2

IN THE LIVING ROOM, his feet up on a hassock, Michael sipped the last of the Scotch from his glass, keeping his eye on the TV set across the room. It was the top of the fourth, the Yankees one to nothing against the Chicago White Sox. He watched Kaat, the White Sox pitcher, go into that sudden sidearm, with hardly any windup, and there was a sharp crack of the bat as Graig Nettles popped a grounder to second. He was about to go get himself another drink when he heard Jennie come down the stairs and into the room.

She stopped just inside the door, expectantly, holding the long white skirts up ever so slightly, as if about to curtsey.

He unwound his legs from the hassock and stood up, the glass still in his hand. "Is that it? I like it."

"Isn't it beautiful, Michael?" She twirled giddily, eyes delighted.

He grinned. "You look like Julie Christie in *The Go-Between*."

"Roberta did a fabulous job, don't you think?" she said, turning from side to side like a fashion model.

"Marvelous. It looks just like the sketches." He made a complete circle around her, examining the dress, one eye cocked toward the TV screen. The Yankees had just scored, making it two to nothing. "Did she do all that just from the sketches?"

"Uh huh. She made her own pattern. She said it's what they wore in the eighteen-nineties." She spun completely around, the frothy skirts swishing against her legs. "Do you think I'd look good with a parasol?"

The picture on the screen was beginning to blur. "I think you'd look great with a parasol," he said, fiddling with the dials. "I like your hair up like that."

The set adjusted, he returned to his chair and put his feet up on the hassock again.

Jennie was floating in slow circles around the room now, eyes closed, humming to herself. "It's amazing—just wearing it makes me feel light and buoyant. No wonder the waltz was so popular in those days." She stopped and held out her arms. "Dance with me?"

"Sorry. I never learned how to waltz." He jiggled the ice cubes in his glass. "You're standing in front of the set. I can't see."

She came over and leaned down to give him a kiss. "Interesting game, huh? Who's winning?"

"The Yankees, so far." He watched the Chicago left-fielder shading his eyes to catch a pop fly and retire the side.

"Which ones are they?"

"They're just taking the field. The White Sox are coming to bat."

She watched for a moment, then took the empty glass from him. "Can I get you another?"

"Thanks, I'd like one."

It was only when she'd left the room that he realized she must be disappointed, expecting some special response to the dress. It was an old sore spot between them: her need for a show of emotion he couldn't provide. She had a way of going all soft when she looked at him that always made him shy away. She seemed to melt in love-making, her face shining pure and vulnerable, and confronted with the depth of that emotion he was sometimes afraid he would drown in it.

That was the good thing about Elaine, the girl he had had the affair with: it was pure sex with her, no pretense between them of tenderness and adolescent romance. She was a tall and lanky twenty-seven-year-old who lived in the Village, and it had been the kind of experience he had missed when he was single, but he was glad it was over. She was, ultimately, depressing. She was attracted to him, he sometimes thought, perversely, because as a stockbroker he was, like her father, a successful member of that straight world she professed to hate, and sometimes after a bout of sex that had lasted an hour, remembering her guttural cries and her teeth clenched at the moment of climax almost as if in hatred, he had wanted nothing so much as to steal out of bed and leave. But

her availability had always drawn him back, until Jennie's finding out had caused him to put an end to it. Occasionally now, he regretted that he couldn't reach that level of excitement with Jennie, but the kind of intensity she wanted was something altogether different.

She came back in with another drink and took the chair beside him. "How's the game?"

"Chicago just had another scoreless inning." The picture on the screen had switched to a Miller High Life commercial.

"It's a beautiful day out," she said, perched on the edge of the chair, smiling at him. "I drove down Bond Street coming back from town and ended up in the middle of a street festival right beside the lake. They've got rides and booths and a sort of flea market. People were paddling around the lake in those little boats you paddle with your feet. It was so lovely."

"Must be some kind of local thing," he said, watching the TV picture beginning to blur again. "I wonder if that thing is going on the blink. I think I'll see if we can get the cable here."

"I was thinking of going back there," she said. "The two of us. We could walk around the lake. It's not that far."

He got up to fiddle with the dials again. "Anywhere I have to walk is too far."

"It'd be a beautiful way to celebrate my new dress."

"That dress?" He grinned. "You get it dirty, it'll cost a fortune to clean."

"But wouldn't it be fun?"

"Frankly, walking a mile to a flea market's not my idea of fun. Now do you mind? I want to watch this game."

She sat through another inning, but when a commercial came on again, she came over and put her arms around him from behind his chair. "I think I've had enough baseball for today."

"Sorry about the walk."

"Oh, it's okay. I may go by myself."

"I think the dress is beautiful," he said, but she had already left the room.

• • •

Back up in the bedroom, she stood at the window looking out across the back yard and the field flanking Summer House Road. Sunlight tinged the roof of a neighbor's house, beyond a thicket of trees at the other end of the field. It was late afternoon, the tree outside the window casting long shadows across the flower beds at the edge of the yard. She went to look at herself in the mirror again, but the sight of herself in the dress failed to excite her now. Her thoughts had begun to seem subversive. Beverly had called her a romantic as if it were some kind of abnormality, but was it abnormal to want your husband to allow some softness in his eyes when he looked at you, to express real feeling in a kiss? Sadly, she turned away from the mirror and went to sit on the bed.

It had been a mistake to come to New York. Maybe things would have been better if she had stayed in the Midwest. People were different there, more open, more willing to show emotions. She realized what she was thinking and made herself stop it. It wasn't Michael's fault if he wasn't demonstrative; she had known that when she married him. She became aware of an ache at the base of her neck, thick dull pain seeping up from the muscles in her shoulders. The headaches again—the first time since they had moved to the country. Depressed, she lay down on the bed and curled up on the satiny bedspread, one hand pressed against the back of her neck. Even as she fell asleep she could feel the headache working its way up into her temple.

• • •

The pain seemed to burst in her head. She was wrenched from sleep, full of an agony so overwhelming it was like a blinding white flash just behind her eyes, causing her to cry out and arch her head back against the bed, her hands clutching her face. And then it was gone, abruptly subsiding back into that dull ache again, and she seemed to rise upward through shifting panels of orange and lavender light, as if out of some great inner depth. In the sluggish confusion of her mind something struck her as strange, and she fumbled through her daze to focus on what it might be. Then she heard it, clear and distinct: a steady *tock-tock-tock-tock* coming from the other side of the room.

Even with her eyes closed she knew something was wrong. The bed felt different, softer, shifting like a pillow beneath her weight. The bedspread was rough and quilted, not satiny at all. Then she opened her eyes and saw it,

across the room: a dresser she had never seen before and on it a large old clock, more than a foot tall, the pendulum behind its glass face swinging steadily back and forth: *tock-tock-tock-tock-tock-tock-tock-tock.*

She lay completely still, afraid to move. Near the dresser was a tall narrow chair with a wicker seat. An ornately trimmed chifforobe stood in one corner. The very quality of the air seemed changed, so that even though she recognized the dimensions of the room it didn't seem like the same room at all. She felt panic enter stealthily into her. Only her eyes seemed able to function, darting to the unfamiliar curtains at a window divided now into unexpectedly tiny panes, to a strange rag rug on the floor, to the iron railing of the bed she was lying on. *I'm dreaming*, she thought, *this is a dream*, but it was too real to be a dream. She turned on her back to look at the ceiling, trembling, waiting, feeling the blood rise to her ears, panic reaching for her throat.

Then she heard a door burst open downstairs; the high, wild whinny of a horse outside; voices, shouts, footsteps in the living room.

"*Lay her down!"* someone shouted. "*Put her on the couch!"*

"*Pamela? Pamela?*"

She felt panic spinning inside her, taking hold of her in a way she thought she recognized, and she grasped at that answer, that proof, thinking *it's a dream, this is a dream, this is the kind of fear you feel in a dream.* And then the panic rose up and took her completely, and the blood pulsing in her ears drowned everything else out.

And she woke up.

Fearfully, she stilled her breathing and listened. There was no sound. Slowly, carefully, she turned and looked across the room. There was no clock. The dresser was the one she had brought from the city, sitting blandly in the light from the window. The window was the way it had always been, divided evenly into two large panes. Her Scandinavian rug was back in place on the floor, the bed was her own, and the bedspread was the satiny one she had put on herself, only that morning. Gratefully, she realized the headache was gone.

• • •

Downstairs, Michael punched the on-off button and watched the picture on the screen contract to a tiny dot of light. The Yankees had won it, four to

one. He took the empty glass into the kitchen and put it in the sink. The house was silent; Jennie must have gone for her walk. Probably his refusing to go had hurt her; it was hard to keep in mind how easily hurt she had become in the last year. He had just decided to go out and find her when she came down the stairs into the dining room, dressed in jeans and a shirt.

"Hey," he said, "where's the dress? I thought you were going for a walk."

She laughed, a little nervously. "I fell asleep."

"You fell asleep?"

She put her arms around him and laid her head against his chest. "Honey, I feel so strange."

He eased her back a bit so that he could see her face. "What's the matter?"

"I just had the oddest dream."

"Is that all—a nightmare?"

"Not really a nightmare. I fell asleep, and then I woke up with this terrible headache—or at least I thought I was awake. But everything was so strange. The room was different. The furniture was all old, like antiques, and then there was all this noise downstairs and somebody shouting, 'Pamela! Pamela!' It was so *real*."

He made her look at him. "You haven't been getting those headaches again?"

"No, no, it wasn't the headache, it was the dream. It was so *strange.*"

He laughed. "Doesn't sound like such a bad dream to me. You should see some of the ones I have."

"But it was so real. It was just now, and I can still see it, like it really happened to me."

"I was just going to go out and join you," he said. "I thought you'd gone down to the lake. You still feel like a walk?"

"Not now, it's too late." She slipped away and with delicate fingers began nipping dead petals from a bowl of flowers on the dining-room table. "I've never had a dream like that before, where everything is so real and specific. I felt like I was back in another century."

"It's that dress and this house. They put you in a nineteenth-century mood."

"I suppose so. I guess these are dying." She carried the bowl of flowers into the kitchen and poured the water out in the sink.

"I'm sorry I was so glued to that ball game," he said.

She dumped the dead flowers into the trash bag below the sink and wiped her hands on a towel. "I guess I should know by now how you are with ball games." She smiled again, to show he was forgiven. "It's too late for a walk, but we could have a drink together."

"I think that's an excellent idea," he said.

While he rummaged in the refrigerator for ice cubes, she went for glasses to the old corner cupboard. "I love this cupboard," she said, fingering the glass-paned doors. "The real estate broker said it's been in the house almost a hundred years. Can you imagine that?"

He got the Scotch bottle out of the liquor cabinet. "You've got old on the brain. No wonder you're dreaming about it."

The drinks made, they sat at the kitchen table. She seemed shy, revolving her glass on the table top, as if seeking some way to show she really had forgiven him. The sun was setting outside, sunlight stretching long tentacles through the trees at the other end of the house.

"I love this light," she said. "It's always like this about this time of day. It reminds me of my grandparents' farm in Ohio, when I was a girl, because they never turned on the lights until it was almost dark. I used to love that, sitting in those shadowy rooms watching the afternoon change into evening. I always made believe we were in pioneer times, when they had oil lamps and feather beds and things like that."

"That dream really did put you in a nineteenth-century mood, didn't it?"

"I suppose so. I never realized how much I missed things like that in the city."

"Why don't we go out on the patio? It should be nice out there now."

"It was so real, though," she said, getting up from the table. "The dream, I mean. That's what gets me."

"You've just got a bad case of nostalgia, that's all."

"But why Pamela?" she said, as she opened the door onto the patio. "I don't even know anyone named Pamela."

3

THAT NIGHT she woke in sudden panic and sat bolt upright in bed, staring unseeing into the dark, feeling the rapid thumping of her heart deep within her breast, for one scared second unable to believe what she had heard: that tremendous smashing of glass somewhere downstairs. For a moment she thought the room had changed, that she was dreaming it as she had that afternoon, but then she saw she was wrong. The house was silent now, ticking away in its usual nighttime quiet, with only the faintest hum from the air conditioner, a faint rattle of the air conditioner grille; but there could be no mistaking that violent outburst of sound she had heard from the floor below.

She turned, eyes adjusting to the dark, to see Michael up on one elbow.

"What was that?" he said.

"I don't know." She strained to hear the slightest unusual sound—a footstep, the groan of a stair, the creak of an opening door—but there was nothing. A faint movement at the window caught her eye, and she started, stared through the intervening dark, but it was only the curtain moving slightly in the current from the air conditioner. "Do you think someone's breaking in?"

"This is the country, for God's sake. We're supposed to be safe from that here."

He swung out of bed and fumbled on a chair for his pants. She started to protest but stifled it, thinking in the arrested surge of her mind about that farmhouse in Kansas, the Clutter family, those two killers prowling the darkened house in the eerie glow of flashlights, carrying a shotgun. *In Cold Blood.* She watched Michael's vague form struggling into his pants, heard the jingling of his belt buckle in the dark.

He rummaged inside the closet near the door. “Isn’t there anything I could use for a weapon?”

She thought for a moment. “In the top left drawer of the dresser. My electric comb. You’ll have to wind up the cord.”

She got out of bed, wrapped herself in a robe, and tiptoed across to the dresser. Michael was hefting the comb by the handle.

“It’s not much,” he said, “but it’ll have to do.”

“Michael, be careful.”

She watched him dwindle to a shadowy figure down the dark hallway, then disappear down the stairs. Behind her, the air conditioner grille maintained its minuscule rattle. She shivered, hugging the robe to her; it was suddenly very scary to be alone. She crept to the top of the stairs and looked down.

In the dark, she could see nothing. She wanted to call out to Michael, but that seemed suddenly dangerous: it would warn whoever had broken the glass. Then the light in the dining room went on, and she saw Michael against the far wall, near the light switch, the comb at the ready.

The dining room looked normal. The oak table gleamed dully under the light. The mirror over the buffet was intact. She saw a shadowy movement in the black of the window glass and for an instant she started, but it was only Michael’s reflection as he turned, surveying the room. He went to the dining-room door and leaned around, then disappeared into the dark kitchen. She held her breath and listened. The silence seemed ominous. The kitchen light went on, but still he said nothing.

“Michael?” Her voice seemed unnaturally loud in the night’s quiet. “Michael, are you there?”

There was still nothing but that ominous silence.

“Michael?”

“Come down here and look at this,” he said.

Quickly she descended the stairs and went into the kitchen. He was standing with his hands on his hips, looking at the tall old cupboard in the corner.

“Oh, my poor cupboard.” She went down on her knees in front of it, careful to avoid the splinters of glass on the floor. The pane in the left door was

completely smashed, only little jagged edges left around the frame. Thin, hairline cracks radiated away from a large, tear-shaped hole in the right pane.

"I don't understand it," Michael said. "It's the only thing broken. The windows are all right. And I checked the door—it's still locked."

She picked up a large splinter of glass. It was streaked with the discolorations of age. "Do you think just because it was so old . . . ?"

"I don't see how. Glass doesn't break just because it's old. Crack, maybe, if you put pressure on it. But this looks like something's been thrown through it. Look, most of the glass is inside the cupboard. *Behind* the doors."

"Michael, I'm scared."

He pulled her up against him and put his arm around her. "There's nothing to be scared of, kid. Things like this don't just happen. There's some explanation for it."

"But you said yourself the door's still locked, the windows aren't broken. What could have caused it?"

"Maybe atmospheric conditions. You know those windshields you see sometimes? Shattered so fine they're almost white? I think that's what does that."

Jennie felt goose bumps rippling her arms. The clock above the stove said 2:13. The silence of the house seemed unnatural, not an absence of sound but like a hushed waiting for something about to happen. In the brilliant black of the window panes she saw her own face reflected back at her, ethereal and strange, like a disembodied other self hovering just outside. She remembered the dream that afternoon—the voices downstairs calling out another woman's name—and the thought of someone, some presence, here in the room with them made her shiver.

"Well, what the hell," Michael said. "Better clean it up."

Together they swept up the glass, and while Michael carried it out to the trash barrel beside the garage, she stood in the kitchen door, looking out into the night. The flagstones of the patio were ghostly pale in the moonlight. A faint wind rustled through the trees looming up huge and black at the edge of the yard. In the unfamiliar guise of night, everything seemed alien and ominous, as if the house had a secret life of its own, into which she intruded only at her own peril.

4

JENNIE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, waiting for fresh coffee to perk in the kitchen behind her, her long dress brilliantly white in the late morning sun. The table was set up in the shade of the tree on the far side of the patio. It was nearly noon; they had just finished Sunday brunch. Across the table Beverly was leaning back in her chair, talking to Michael. Beside her, plump and scowling through the smoke of his cigar, Don had the entire Sunday *Times* on his lap, reading the headlines on the top page. Jennie was very happy. Everything was right: the cool white of the tablecloth in the deep shade, the colorful array of napkins and cups and bowls, the rustle of the trees in the quiet of the morning. When the coffee was ready, she carried it across the patio to the table.

"More coffee, Don?"

"I always accept more coffee from a lovely lady. Have I told you how beautiful you look this morning? That's a ravishing dress."

Jennie blushed. "It goes well with the house, don't you think? A nineteenth-century dress for a nineteenth-century house."

"I love this house," Beverly said. "That view of the lake is gorgeous. Wouldn't you like a house like this, Don?"

"I wouldn't live in this house. It's haunted."

"Don't laugh," Michael said. "I think it is."

"You never found out what broke that glass?"

"Some kind of atmospheric change is all I can think of. With glass that old, who knows?"

"Maybe you have a poltergeist," Beverly said.

"A what?"

"A poltergeist. A spirit that haunts houses. Knocks things off shelves and pounds on the walls and things. There've been some well-documented accounts."

"I hope we haven't got one," Jennie said, setting the coffee pot on the table and returning to her chair. "We left the city to find peace and quiet."

"Or maybe it's somebody trying to get through from a parallel world," Beverly said. "There's a theory, you know, that beyond some sort of cosmic barrier there's another world just like this one—same landscape, same environment, everything. Certain things are supposed to be different, but basically it's just the same."

"I didn't know you were a science-fiction buff," Michael said.

"Oh, this isn't science fiction. Science fiction writers have been speculating about a parallel universe for ages, but this is something different. I just read about it recently. It has something to do with karma and reincarnation and all that."

"Spare me," Don said. "If there's anything I can't stand, it's this whole occult explosion. Reincarnation, meditation, exorcism—the whole country's gone nuts."

"I think the idea of a parallel world is fascinating," Jennie said. "What does it have to do with reincarnation?"

"It's supposedly where you go when you die," Beverly said. "Actually, according to the theory, there's a whole series of parallel worlds. Each one is a higher level of existence, and the higher the level of existence the more changed that world is from this. According to the theory, if you die naturally, of old age, it means you've worked out your karma and you pass on to a higher level of existence. But if you die young you pass on to a parallel world like this one, so you can work out the karma for this incarnation. But the point is that it's almost exactly like this world, with the same geography and everything."

Don made a face. "You've been a magazine editor too long. Reading every crackpot idea published in the last ten years would scramble anybody's brains."

"Well, maybe it's somebody trying to contact you from out of the past." Beverly winked at Jennie and turned solemnly to Don. "There's another theory, you know, that the past, present and future exist simultaneously, and if you only knew how, you could move from one to the other."

"Enough of your theories," Don said. He extracted the sports section from the paper. "Does anybody want to read any of this? Mike, you want the business section?"

"Give me the travel section. I don't think about Wall Street on Sundays."

"Back to the real world," Beverly said. "How is Wall Street these days?"

"The same," Michael said. "The Street never changes."

"Never changes?"

"What goes up changes. The Street never changes."

Don shuffled the remaining sections in his lap. "Jennie? Arts and Leisure? Book Review?"

"Nothing, Don, thanks." She drank her coffee, watching the others read. She felt wonderfully peaceful, with only the occasional chink of a spoon against a cup, the rustle of a page being turned, the scrape of a shoe on the stone of the patio as someone moved in a chair. Bees hummed lazily through the flowers in the big circular flower bed in the driveway. A car drove slowly by, only its top visible above the hedge at the other end of the yard, where the road passed the front of the house. Michael caught her eye and winked, and she felt a quick smile leap to her face. He could be a love sometimes when she least expected it.

After the coffee was finished and the *Times* disposed of, they went for a walk out along the driveway and down the road toward the lake. Michael and Jennie walked arm-in-arm, with Don and Beverly just ahead. The only sound was the faint scuff of their heels against the pavement. Down below the hill, the lake lay flat and blue and wide, the town intermittently visible through the trees on the other side. One small white sailboat skimmed in slow and dreamy silence across its surface. Jennie watched a white-clad figure duck as the boom came around and the boat slowly tacked off on a new slant across the water. She felt positively radiant in her new dress, and she gave a little exuberant hop and skip to get into step with Michael. *This* was how she had wanted life in the country to be. A quiet brunch on the patio, a few friends visiting from the city, a leisurely stroll in the afternoon.

"This is a very quiet road," Don said. "How come there's no traffic?"

"It's a kind of side road," Michael said. "Years ago there was a bridge down at the lower end of the lake, and this was the main road into town. When they

took the bridge out, they closed this road off. It ends in a turn-around now, at the bottom of the hill."

Beverly pointed ahead, fifty yards beyond the house, to where another road cut off from the pavement curving to descend the hill. "Where does that go?"

"That's Summer House Road," Michael said. "There's a summer house or two in the woods there above the lake. It connects to the main road a couple of miles farther on."

They were passing in front of the house, where the flagstone steps led up through a break in the hedge to the yard, when Jennie suddenly stopped. "My hat. I forgot my hat."

"You don't need a hat," Michael said.

"It's my wide-brimmed white hat. I got it especially to wear with the dress."

"The lady wants her hat, Michael," Beverly said. "Run back and get it, Jennie. We'll wait for you."

"No, you go on ahead," Jennie said, starting up the steps. "I'll meet you down at the lake."

Back in the upstairs bedroom, she donned the hat and looked at herself in the mirror. It was the perfect touch. The dim light of the room made her reflection look like one of those old, brown-tinted daguerreotypes. Happily, she hurried out and down the flagstone steps to the road again.

The others were already out of sight around the turn, descending the hill toward the lake. She could hear their voices drifting back up to her.

"I can't get over how Jennie looks," Don was saying. "Life in the country is really doing wonders for her."

"And that dress," Beverly said. "She looks absolutely adorable in it. Like something out of a movie."

"I like dresses like that," Don said. "That's what they wore back when men were men and women were women."

"Hear, hear," Michael said. "*Vive la différence.*"

"Did you see her blush when you complimented her on it?" Beverly said. "I've never seen Jennie blush before."

"I haven't seen any woman blush in years," Don said. "It's refreshing."

Listening, Jennie felt another blush creep up over her face, the hot blood tingling on the surface of her skin. Then another blush seemed to follow it, a

hot wave rising up over her and not stopping, flooding into her head, beating in her ears, making her dizzy. She felt a sudden tense wire of pain thread its way from the back of her neck up into her temple. She stopped, her legs going weak and her head faint. Through a kind of haze, she saw the cutoff to Summer House Road shimmer and waver ahead of her. Dimly, she heard Beverly say, "I think we'd better wait for her."

And then everything went black.

• • •

She was standing on a narrow dirt road. Deep brushy thickets rose above her head along the ditches on either side. The clear air was rich with the smell of earth and vegetation. Ahead, where the thickets flanked an abrupt downward curve, a rabbit emerged onto the road and paused on its haunches, then proceeded in leisurely hops into the brush on the other side.

Then, behind her, coming toward her, she heard an unfamiliar sound: *clop-clop-clop-clop-clop-clop-clop-clop-clop-clop.* She turned. It was a horse-drawn buggy, coming along the road toward her, sprays of dust flying up from the buggy wheels. In the open cockpit of the buggy sat a dark-haired young man, in a white shirt and a dark, open vest, a thick dark moustache looping across his face. At the sight of him, she felt a strange, painful yearning rise in her breast, something as strong as love swell in her throat. Then, as the buggy came closer, close enough for her to see his brilliant blue eyes, she realized he had seen her. He stared at her, strangely, and she felt a stitch of fear jerk through her. Abruptly, he stood up in the buggy and lashed the horse directly toward her. Panic flooded into her, and she turned to run. A rut in the road clutched at her heel, and she staggered, caught herself and ran on, suddenly terrified, the *clop-clop-clop* of the horse looming ominously up behind her. Running, she turned and saw him lashing the horse after her, his eyes fixed wide and strange on hers, and she felt the panic seize at her throat and staggered off the road and plunged into the brush, floundering through thick branches that caught at her, tripped her, caused her to fall.

As the brush closed behind her, she heard his shout—eerie, desperate: "*Pamela!*"

• • •

Voices seemed to come from a great distance—approaching and receding, looming and fading like waves. She was floating, revolving on a giant horizontal wheel in slow and sweeping revolutions, around and around and around. The turning was making her sick. A hot flush swept through her, then a cold one, bringing beads of sweat to her brow. Someone was slapping her face—softly, gently. She jerked her head to escape the slaps and opened her eyes. Through a blur, she saw Michael's face hovering over her, anxious and concerned.

"Jennie?" he said. "Jennie, are you all right?"

Don and Beverly loomed over his shoulder, seeming to waver and recede through her dizziness. The nausea swept over her and then subsided again. She felt grass under her hands and turned to see that she was lying on the brow of the hill, several yards across the road from the house. And then, abruptly, she remembered and it all came back, vivid and real: the narrow dirt road, the oncoming horse, the man in the buggy shouting after her as she ran. She wrenched free of Michael's grasp and struggled to sit up.

"Whoa," he said. "Take it easy."

"What . . . what happened?"

"You must have fainted. We waited for you, and when you didn't come, we came back and found you lying here. What were you doing way over here?"

"I don't know. I just . . . fainted."

"I still think we should call a doctor," Beverly said. "She's awfully pale."

"I'm all right." She struggled unsteadily to her feet, swaying, feeling faint again.

Michael caught her. "Well, I know one thing. We're going to take you back and put you to bed."

She remembered the upstairs bedroom—that terrible pain in her head, the furniture she did not recognize, the noise and shouts from downstairs. Pamela. The same name the man had shouted at her from the buggy, whipping the horse after her along the road. Still dizzy, she clung to Don and Michael as they guided her across the road, their voices again murmuring as if from a great distance, the flagstone steps seeming to swim toward her, reality receding again before the memory of that ancient pendulum clock *tock-tock-tocking* on the unfamiliar dresser, those frightening hoofbeats looming up behind her, her

own awful realization that there was beginning to happen to her something she could not understand, something terrifying and strange.

5

"So," Dr. Shapiro said. "Now you've taken to fainting, have you?"

"Mmmm," Jennie said. It was hard to say much else, because he was holding her left eyelid open between his thumb and forefinger while he peered into her pupil with his little penlight.

"Okay." He released her eyelid, and she blinked.

He went back around his desk and wrote something in his little leather-bound spiral notebook. She wondered what he was writing but was afraid to ask, afraid it might be something she didn't want to hear. Brain tumors, she had heard, sometimes began behind the eyes; a brain tumor, something happening to her mind, might explain those dreams, or hallucinations—those frightening experiences she was afraid even to mention to him. She waited for his verdict, but he was still writing in the notebook. With his head bent that way, she could see his bald crown gleaming under thin strands of white hair. Michael didn't like him—no doctor that old could be any good, he said—but she stuck with him because he was so nice, even now when she had to come all the way in from the country.

He finished writing and looked up from his notebook. "What about the headaches? Still getting them?"

"Twice since we moved to the country. I thought they were gone, they went away right after we decided to move, but I've had two again in the last two weeks."

"When you fainted?"

"Yes, I had one then. Just before. It only lasted a second, and then I fainted."

"And the other one?"

"Pardon?"

"The other headache. You didn't faint then?"

"I had a dream."

"You had a dream?"

She realized how strange that sounded. "I went to sleep after I had the headache, and I had this very strange dream."

She had an impulse to tell him about it, about everything: the woman in the dream, and the horse and buggy on the road yesterday, and the way both times she seemed to have gone back into another time. About how real it felt, and the coincidence of the name Pamela both times, which she couldn't explain, and which frightened her. She had to tell somebody. She hadn't even told Michael about yesterday. He was already upset enough, insisting she come in for a complete checkup.

"The headaches and fainting I know about," Dr. Shapiro said, pumping up a blood-pressure cuff on her arm, "but for dreams you'll have to see somebody else. That's another branch of medicine." After he had taken her blood pressure, he stowed the cuff away on a shelf. "How are you getting along with that handsome husband of yours?"

She wondered how much he suspected. She had seen him several times in the year before they moved, when she had been so nervous and the headaches had been bothering her, but they hadn't discussed Michael. "We're doing very well since we moved, I think."

He wrote something on a card and came around to sit on the edge of his desk. "Now, Jennie, I'm going to give you some advice. I said a while ago I could handle the headaches and the fainting. To a certain extent I can, but only to a certain extent. Now what I'm going to say you might find a little upsetting, but I assure you, there's no reason to. I've told you before the headaches are caused by tension, by emotional pressure. I have a strong suspicion the fainting is, too. I was meaning to suggest this even before you moved to the country, so it's nothing precipitate, though I must say I don't like this fainting. But there's nothing more I can do to alleviate those headaches, and if they continue I want you to promise me you'll see a psychiatrist." He raised his hands. "I know, I know. Nobody likes to be told to see a psychiatrist. But a psychiatrist is just another specialist. If you had a skin problem, I'd send

you to a dermatologist. What you have is a problem caused by emotional tension, and in that case the specialist happens to be called a psychiatrist."

"You think a psychiatrist would make the headaches go away?"

"Practically guaranteed. I'm not saying you're a neurotic. You're just going through a difficult period, and you need a little help adjusting to it. You just find out what's causing that tension, and how to deal with it, and in a little while it'll probably disappear." He smiled his gentle smile. "Promise?"

"Okay."

"That's a good girl. Now I've written the name of a good analyst on this card, and if those headaches continue you set up an appointment to see him. Tell him I sent you."

"All right, Dr. Shapiro. I promise."

He helped her on with her jacket and held the door open for her while she picked up her purse. "And you tell that husband of yours if he doesn't take good care of you, I'll see he gets a sound thrashing. Even if I have to do it myself."

He was smiling, but she could tell he was serious. She had another sudden urge to confide in him—but how could she tell this sweet old man about a bedroom changing around her, about a man in a buggy chasing her on a road, shouting after her another woman's name? About that, there was no one she could confide in.

"Thank you, Dr. Shapiro. I'll tell him."

• • •

The next day, after Michael left for work, she went for a walk along the road. It was a very hot day; down at the bottom of the hill the lake reflected the almost milky blue of the sky. She walked slowly along in front of the house, carefully studying the angle of the road, the slope of the roadside ditches, the view ahead of her. She could barely admit to herself why she was out here, examining this innocent stretch of asphalt. Still frighteningly clear in her memory was that oncoming horse, the man in the buggy, that cool dirt road she had somehow been transported to only two days before. She was afraid to acknowledge what it might mean: her suspicion that in some way this was the same road.

She wasn't sure why she thought that. It didn't really look the same. There were no trees or brushy hedgerows along the roadsides as there had been with the other, and this road was paved. She walked on toward the cutoff to Summer House Road. In the vision there had been no cutoff there, nothing but a solid bank of trees all around the curve.

But that was it—the similarity. Because of the brush, there had been no way of telling where it went or if there had been a lake below, but in the vision, too, about the same distance ahead, the road had curved to plunge down the hill. And the shape of the curve had been the same. She had felt it even then—that it was the same road, the way it might have been a hundred years ago.

She heard the approach of a car ahead of her and stepped to the side of the road. It was an old red pickup, faded almost pink, emerging out of Summer House Road. The driver, a round-faced old man with fishing flies stuck in his hat, looked at her curiously as he rattled past. She felt conspicuous and strange, out here comparing the road to a dream. She turned and went back to the house.

Another day passed, and still she couldn't get the dreams, or visions, or whatever they were out of her mind. How could she believe that there was some force, some supernatural power, with the ability to thrust her back into another time? But the alternative was just as frightening—the possibility that that nervous sickness she had had in the city was getting worse instead of better, and was taking a particularly scary turn: people who began to see things, to hear voices . . . She tried not to think of that.

She was glad Michael hadn't taken Dr. Shapiro's suggestion seriously. "If he can't find out what causes headaches and fainting," he said, "I certainly wouldn't take his word about any psychiatrist. I think you should see some other doctor."

"I doubt if that would help," she said. "I guess there's just nothing a doctor can do about headaches." But for once she was grateful that he had so little faith in Dr. Shapiro. The idea of seeing a psychiatrist frightened her.

She suffered through a week of anxiety, trying unsuccessfully to lose herself in work on the attic studio, stripping paint from the woodwork. But she couldn't concentrate, and the anxiety stayed with her, making her so nervous she ended up scraping more skin from her hands than paint from the wood,

and finally she gave it up, stopped work one day in the middle of the afternoon, determined to pull herself together. She took a bath and did her nails, resolving to take the afternoon off and go for a walk along the lake. It was an old remedy: giving herself a present when she was feeling bad.

In the second-floor bedroom, her hair piled up atop her head, she slipped into the new long dress and looked at herself in the mirror, slim and white and beautiful. It made her feel better already. She scooped up the jeans and shirt she had been working in and started for the clothes hamper in the bathroom down the hall.

But just outside the doorway she felt a sudden and familiar ache begin just at the point where her right shoulder joined the back of her neck. It was abruptly there and just as abruptly very intense, throbbing up her neck into her temple. With it came a roil of nausea, a wave of dizziness, a sudden rush of weakness through her legs. She leaned helplessly against the wall, closing her eyes tight against the pain.

And then, just as suddenly, the pain was gone.

She opened her eyes.

She saw with a shock that the hallway was different. The long runner carpet was gone; the floor stretched bare and gleaming toward the stairs. The walls were covered with unfamiliar wallpaper, gray with a filigree of flowers; the buffet table was gone from the head of the stairs. She touched a hand to her face, almost as if to see if she was real. Her hand was trembling violently. Panicky, she thought: *This is not a dream*. I haven't fainted. I didn't fall asleep, I didn't even lie down. *This is real*.

Slowly, the jeans and shirt still clutched in one hand, she turned. The window at the other end of the hallway was different, with little ruffled curtains of something like unbleached cotton tied back on each side. Cautiously, as if any second the floor might shift beneath her feet, she moved to that window.

The view outside had changed. The slope of the back field was the same, but there was no thicket of trees at its other edge, no house half hidden behind those trees. There were no electric wires along Summer House Road; in fact, there was no Summer House Road. A split-rail fence bordered the edge of the

field on the left, and beyond the fence was only a dense thicket of trees running along the ridge.

There was still a tree in the yard, but where her flower garden should have been she saw a grape arbor, several rows of tall twisted vines. Beyond that was a vegetable garden, and beyond the garden another split-rail fence separating the yard and garden from the field. On the right she could see the edge of a barn, and behind it the fencing of some kind of animal pen.

A movement in the grape arbor caught her eye. She saw it again: something moving through an opening in the leaves. It moved, rose upward, and with a start she saw that it was a man, his back to her, spading around the roots of one of the vines. Frightened, awe-struck, she watched the long flat muscles of his back flex under the shirt, the tightening of his dark trousers against the backs of his legs. Fear made her go weak again, and she wrenched her eyes closed, trying to summon back reality, but when she opened them he was still there, still spading in the dark earth.

Now he stopped and thrust the spade into the ground. He turned and came back along the row toward the yard, and with a strange thrill she recognized the man who had pursued her in the buggy that day on the road. The same black hair, the same dark moustache. From some inner center for which she could find no source came that same strange stirring she had felt that day on the road—a kind of tender yearning ache, something akin to love.

He crossed the yard to the tree, sat down against its trunk, and fumbled a pipe out of his shirt pocket. A long-eared dog ambled out of the row behind him and flopped down at his side. Jennie watched, her mind suspended, as he lit the pipe and reached over to scratch the dog's ears. Again, through her fear, she felt that strange lovely ache in the pit of her stomach, that gentle yearning; she felt he was almost close enough to reach out and touch. He leaned his head back against the tree trunk and closed his eyes, sucking on his pipe.

When he opened his eyes he was looking directly up at her window. She recoiled in fear, her heart suddenly pounding again. When she peered out again through the crack between curtain and windowsill, he was staring up toward the window, one hand braced against the tree trunk, ready to propel him up. Though she knew he could not see her through the crack, his eyes

seemed to be looking directly into her own, with a burning force that made her knees go weak.

"Pamela?" he called.

For a second he remained poised against the base of the tree; then he propelled himself into a dead run toward the corner of the house. Jennie let go of the windowsill and turned, stunned, her hand to her throat. She heard the kitchen door open downstairs, footsteps racing through the house, starting up the stairwell. Panicked, she stumbled away from the window, dizziness rushing to her head, blindly reaching to the wall for support.

The sound of footsteps ceased.

In the hushed pause that followed, the only sound was that of her own pulse thumping in her ears.

The dizziness passed, and she could see again. The runner rug was back on the floor. The buffet table stood where it always had near the head of the stairs. She turned quickly to the window. The ruffled curtains had disappeared. Beyond her flower garden, she saw telephone poles lining Summer House Road, electric wires slicing through the treetops. Beyond the thicket of trees at the far end of the field was the peak of that familiar house, just where it should be.

The barn, the garden, and the grape arbor were gone.

6

IT OCCURRED TO HER that she might be going insane. She was afraid to think about what was happening to her, and there was no one she could talk to. Beverly called a day or two later, but she couldn't talk to her. And Beverly was in any case enmeshed in her own problems: she and Don had had a fight and had broken up. There was Michael, but she was afraid even to tell him about this new dream, if that was what it was, afraid of what he might say. As it was, he remarked on how depressed she seemed and suggested she needed a rest.

"You've been working too hard getting this house in shape," he said. "Why don't you go out to Fire Island for a weekend with Beverly?"

"I'll be all right," she said. "Half the reason for leaving the city was because I wasn't feeling well. I hate to run away from here for the same reason." She knew that was what he really feared—not overwork, but a renewed siege of the nervous anxiety she had weathered that last year in the city. But it was better he think that than learn the real reason she was upset. She was afraid he would share her own worst suspicion—that she might be going mad.

Now she spent hours every day walking along the lake, trying to regain there the peace of mind the move to the country had originally given her. But every time she returned up the flagstone steps to the yard she would see that tree at the rear corner of the house, and her mind would veer back to those dreams or visions or whatever they were, and her anxiety would begin all over again.

Late one afternoon, after climbing up the steps from the road, she crossed the yard to the tree and, standing in its dappled shade, hesitantly laid her hand against the bark, looking out to where that spectral grape arbor had been. She wondered how long a tree like this lived. If somehow what she saw in those

visions was a real scene with a real person from an earlier time, could this be the same tree? She leaned pensively against it, remembering that mysterious man, the flexing of the muscles under his shirt, his strong hands lighting the pipe, his eyes burning up at her—eyes capable of great depth, of strong emotion.

Usually she was plagued by fear, but there were times like this when she was full of yearning, wanting to feel again that swell of emotion that came each time she saw him, that openness to tenderness and trust she hadn't felt so strongly since she was a girl. No one she knew would admit to such emotions; everyone had become too cynical, or too afraid of being thought naive. Was she naive to be romantic, to think that it was good to feel deep emotions? She turned to look off toward the woods rising up from the lake. Sunlight struck a line of fire along the electric wires above the road; she heard the steady drone of a tractor working in a distant field. She forced herself to remember that this was reality, that what she longed for was an unreal dream. What she was doing was silly, she thought, falling in love with a dream man. She must be regressing to girlhood. She felt a start of fear again. Regression. Was this the first step toward madness?

She went back into the house and climbed the stairs to the bedroom on the second floor. Sunlight spilled in through the window in the far wall; the curtains swelled in a faint breeze, then subsided again. She crossed the room to the wardrobe closet, paused for a moment with her hand on the closet door. Then she turned the small key and swung the door open.

The dress hung dazzlingly white and beautiful inside. The sight of it brought a thickening to her throat. With a kind of awe, she reached in and lifted it in the cradle of her arm, letting it flow like water across her hand. It seemed almost to glow in the dimness of the closet. She hadn't worn it since that afternoon at the upstairs window, but at least once a day she had opened the closet to look at it and feel its delicate fabric, half afraid to admit what she knew to be true: this dress was the cause of whatever was happening to her. She had been wearing it each time she had had a vision—and each vision had taken her to the same place, or the same time, something to do with a woman named Pamela. There was some power in the dress, either to distort her mind or

actually to transport her back to an earlier time, together with whatever she wore with it or carried in her hand.

She lifted it out and draped it against her. If she put it on now would she return to the same place, the same time? Or could it spin her off into some other realm or time totally alien to her? Or was its power a delusion, something her own romantic dreams and longings had fastened on to create in incipient madness what she could not find in reality? Each time before, her fear had seemed to snap her out of the vision, back to reality; if she put it on now, conscious of its power, would she be able to return from wherever it took her? Even if it took her where she wanted to go—back to that man? Trembling but determined, she laid the dress across the bed, stepped out of her shoes, and began to remove her clothes.

When she had changed into the dress and laced up the slim boots she always wore with it, she pinned her hair up under the wide-brimmed hat and stepped away from the bed, waiting. Nothing happened. Slowly, aware of her quick and shallow breathing, she started toward the door, the long skirt rustling about her legs. A sudden movement at the window caused her to start, but it was only the curtains belling out in a breeze. Carefully, she examined the room. Frightened as she was, every innocent object seemed potentially sinister. She felt poised on a precipice, expecting any moment to be seized out into a mysterious void, toward some strange and awesome destination.

She paused outside in the hall. The runner rug still lay on the floor; the curtains licked out the open hallway window. She waited for something to change. And then in a split second the hallway seemed enclosed in gloom, as if a giant hand had closed about the window. Panic rushed to her throat—and then in the instant she realized it was only a cloud passing over the sun, she saw the bedroom door begin to close behind her, as if someone in the bedroom were slowly pulling it to. It swung closed with a slam that seemed to echo through the house, setting her heart aflutter. But still nothing had changed. Slowly, she approached the door, listening. There was no sound. Cautiously, she turned the knob. There was no one inside. Except for the curtains swelling out from the window, there was no movement anywhere. It was the breeze, the breeze between the two windows, which had sucked the door closed behind her. She closed it again and leaned against the wall, one hand to her throat,

feeling the rapid fluttering of her pulse. She could not allow her mind to play tricks on her; that way led to what she feared most: to delusions, and madness. She regained control of herself and went along the hall to the head of the stairs.

Every step creaked beneath her feet on the way down. In her hushed, expectant state she seemed acutely aware of every sound: the sibilant sweep of her skirts from step to step, the whispering brush of her hand along the railing, every beat of blood pulsing through her veins. Nothing in the dining room had changed, except that every piece of furniture—the table, the chairs, the shelves along the walls—seemed in unnaturally sharper focus, as if etched in the very air. Through the windows she saw the circular flower bed in the drive, its colors deep and somber in the sudden overcast. She went into the living room. It seemed forbiddingly dark, though nothing else had changed. Outside, the telephone poles were lonely silhouettes against the sky; the lake lay flat and dark below the hill. She opened the door and stepped outside.

And then it came, suddenly: the muted ache at the back of her neck, the quick growth of pain up into her temple, the sudden rush of dizziness to her head, forcing her to close her eyes. She stood that way for a moment, while the dizziness drained away, leaving only the fear and the wild beating of her heart. Then she opened her eyes.

She was looking out across the sunlit grass to a high brushrow bordering the far edge of the yard. The telephone poles were no longer there; the view of the lake had disappeared behind the brushrow. It had happened so quickly she felt suspended in an otherworldly daze, awe-struck, trying to accept that this was real.

The fear slowly diminished, lay submerged and dormant beneath that other-worldly daze. She tried to quiet her breathing, to focus her mind. There was a break in the foliage at the far end of the yard, where—if, like the house, they existed in this time, too—the flagstone steps should lead down to the road. Hesitantly, remembering, she went across the grass toward it.

The flagstone steps were there. Holding her skirts up with one hand, she descended the steps and turned right along the hard-packed dirt road. She felt a little thrill inside: it was the same road—the same high brush and trees on each side, the same roadside ditches, the same curve up ahead where it plunged down the hill. Where Summer House Road should have been, there was only a

thicket of trees bordering the downward curve. She came to the apex of the curve and stopped.

Below lay the expanse of the lake, calm and blue beneath a crisp, clear sky. Across the lake, changed but still recognizable, was the town, half-hidden among the trees. And then, close to the near shore, a little to the right, she saw a boat. And in the boat a man. A very familiar figure of a man. She shaded her eyes, small tremors of excitement beginning to bubble up through her daze. She could barely make him out, a man with his back to her and, moving in the boat, a smaller figure, the dog. Still she couldn't be sure. Impelled by a strange curiosity, she started down the road.

The woods on each side thinned at the bottom of the hill, the trees becoming farther spaced, the ground beneath them dappled with sunlight. About twenty yards from the water the woods ceased entirely, leaving a flat grassy bank that merged with the marshy reeds along the shore. She crossed the ditch and slipped into the woods, pausing behind a tree. The boat was not a hundred yards away, farther up and out from the bank. The man still sat with his back to her, a fishing pole angling out over the stern. The water was a glassy calm, with only an occasional ripple flickering sunlight at her. The silence seemed almost unearthly.

Then, behind her, from some distance away, came an unfamiliar rattling and the sound of horses. She turned. Far down at the other end of the lake, where it narrowed to empty into the creek below, some sort of carriage was crossing a bridge, turning up the road toward her. She felt a little tremor of fright disturb her daze and, glancing at the boat to make sure the man's back was still turned, picked up her skirts and ran to the shelter of a tree farther away from the road, closer to the boat. In this way, darting from tree to tree, she had retreated into the woods by the time the carriage made the turn up the hill. From behind her tree she watched the horses, a matched pair of grays, lean into their collars as they started up the slope. On the box sat a bearded man, in vest and hat, gripping the reins. In the carriage itself sat four women. in short, tight-waisted jackets and flared skirts. Jennie stared at them, awed. Parasols bloomed above their heads; dainty boots peeked from beneath the hems of their skirts. A wicker basket covered with a cloth sat on the floor between

them. They were talking, laughing, their voices drifting clearly across to her as the carriage receded up the hill.

When she looked at the boat again, the dog was up, front paws on the gunwale, watching the point where the carriage had disappeared. It looked like the same floppy-eared spaniel she remembered from the grape arbor. She felt immobilized by the intense quiet, the sight of the man with his back to her, the boat etched against the quicksilvery lake, the unreal reality of everything around her. Her mind seemed barely able to function, but she was aware of that odd mixture of love and yearning inside, remembered from the other times, and she knew she had to get closer.

She chose a tree farther up the shore, which would put her even with him, directly parallel to the boat. Picking up her skirts again, she began running on tiptoe across the grass toward that tree.

The frantic barking of the dog tumbled her into panic. She halted in mid-flight across the grass. The man was on his feet in the boat, staring at her. It was the same man—the same coal-black hair, the dark moustache, the blue eyes which even at this distance seemed to burn relentlessly into her own. She felt hypnotized, unable to take her eyes from his.

"Pamela?" he called.

His face was ashen. Beside him, the dog leaped and barked, tail churning. Jennie couldn't move. She felt her heart beating in her breast, that strange painful yearning for him twisting in her insides.

"Pamela, stay," he called. "Please. Talk to me. I love you, I don't care what you are." For one frozen instant he continued to stare; then, abruptly, he turned and reached for the oars.

Something seemed to release inside her then, and she ran for the shelter of a tree. When she looked again, gripping the tree for support, she saw that he had turned the boat and was rowing powerfully toward shore. The dog stood in the bow, barking at her as the boat came on. Panicked, she turned and plunged back through the trees, hearing the splash of the oars behind her, the barking of the dog growing louder. The sudden slope of the hill rose upward beneath her feet and she fell, struggled up again, grasping at tree trunks to pull her on. Lungs gasping, blood hammering in her ears, she staggered up through the thickening brush, her boots sinking into the damp layer of leaves, branches

whipping at her face, till she tripped against a rock embedded in the earth and fell full out, exhausted, feeling the fainting rush of blood to her head, the oblivion sweeping over her . . .

• • •

The first thing she was aware of was the smell of grass. The cool earth beneath her hands. The faint rustle of a breeze in the trees overhead. The racing of her heart had begun to slow, but she was still afraid to open her eyes. Then, behind her, she heard the footsteps coming up the slope. The heavy, measured tread of a man. She was afraid to move. The footsteps moved up beside her. Came around in front of her. Stopped.

And then the gravelly voice: "Here now, little lady, are you all right?"

Cautiously, she raised her head. His feet, in heavy work shoes, were only inches away from her eyes. Above them, a pair of stout legs in surplus khaki. A fat hand gripping a bait and tackle box. A burly chest and sloping shoulders. And then—raising her head all the way up—the puffy, concerned moon-face of an elderly man peering down at her from beneath a floppy hat festooned with fishing flies.

"Are you all right?" he said again.

And behind him then she saw the screened-in porch of a summer house and, parked below it, an old faded red pickup truck. She laid her head back down on her hands and let the relief tremble through her.

7

IN THE GRAY AND RAINY dawn the station parking lot was full of cars, commuters sheltering from the rain until the train came. Raindrops bounced and danced along the empty platform. Michael put the shift lever in park, leaving the windshield wipers going, and looked at his watch. Seven forty-two. Usually it was full day by this time, but this morning the lights were still on along the platform, dull blurs of yellow in the rain.

"You'll have to get Wilkins to drive you home," he said.

"I know," Jennie said.

"Usually they lend me a car while this one's in the shop, but you have the Volkswagen, so just get him to drive you home."

"All right."

"You know who he is, don't you? The bald-headed one. He owns the place."

"I know."

She was sitting with her hands in her lap, her head turned away, looking out the side window. She wore an old raincoat she had thrown on at the last minute, her hair tied up in a hasty ponytail. They had been up half the night discussing what had happened to her at the lake, but the drawn look on her face was more than lack of sleep.

"You remember what to ask for," he said. "A tune-up, front end aligned, brakes adjusted."

"I remember."

"Are you feeling all right?"

"I'm all right. I don't think we should talk about it anymore."

"You fainted, and while you were out you had a dream, just like that other time. You've got to stop trying to believe it was real."

"I'm not trying to believe it. It was real."

"Will you just once listen to what you're saying?"

"Michael, let's not start again. Please."

"Jennie, it's got to be dealt with."

"You want me to think I'm going crazy, is that it?"

"Listen, it is possible you're having hallucinations. It happens. People black out and strange things happen. It doesn't mean you're going crazy. I just can't believe you think this is real."

"But it *feels* so real."

"So it feels real. I imagine hallucinations do to whoever has them."

"Then tell me why I always hear the name Pamela. I don't know anyone named Pamela. I've never known anyone named Pamela."

He tried to imagine how it must have seemed: the bedroom changing around her, the man calling to her from the boat on the lake, the horse and buggy pursuing her along the road. That last she had told him only last night, after the old man in the pickup had brought her home—a secret she had kept to herself since the day Don and Beverly were there, when they'd found her unconscious beside the road. How many other times had it happened that she hadn't told him about? It was unlike her to be so stubborn, so unwilling to listen to reason. The wipers click-clacked rhythmically on the windshield, sending a faint shadow back and forth across her face.

"Jennie," he said, "I think this thing is getting too big for us to handle."

She looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"I mean I think we need some help. I think you should see another doctor."

She turned away again, rolling the window down a notch to let in air. A VW van pulled into the parking space on that side of the car, the driver looking across at them for a moment before shutting off the engine. Through the open window came the sound of the rain drumming tinnily on the roof of the van.

"You mean you think I should have my head examined," she said.

"You don't have to put it like that. That doctor you think so much of, Shapiro, he even suggested you see a psychiatrist, after you fainted that time. And he didn't even know about all this."

His only response was the steady click-clacking of the windshield wipers.

"People go into analysis all the time, Jennie. Hell, half the people in the city are in analysis."

Through the window on her side he saw the driver get out of the van, huddled under an umbrella. Car doors were opening all across the parking lot; from beyond the bend on the other side of the station he could hear the train coming. The rain had slackened; the station lights had been turned off.

"What do you say, Jennie?"

"I don't know, Michael. I can't believe I'm imagining all of it. I'm just afraid, that's all."

"That's why I think you need help to find out what's happening. It doesn't help for us to talk about it—we've proved that."

She sighed. "I suppose you're right."

The train came into view beyond the end of the station, leaning slowly around a curve, black engine looming through the rain. Small clusters of umbrellas dotted the platform, and from all over the parking lot came the sound of car doors closing. Jennie looked at him, her face still drawn and pale.

"I know it's a big step," he said, "but I think it's necessary."

She rolled up the window and slid across the seat. "Of course you're right. I'm sorry I've been so strange. It's just all so frightening."

"Shall I make an appointment with that analyst Shapiro recommended?"

"I suppose you'd better."

"I'll call him this morning. Soon as I get to the office." The train had come to a halt; the air brakes hissed; commuters crowded up around the steps. "I've got to go now. Don't forget you have to pick me up tonight."

"Okay. Better hurry."

He retrieved his umbrella and briefcase from the back seat and opened the door. "Try not to think about it today. I'll set up an appointment as soon as I can get one. See you tonight." He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek, then slammed the door and ran for the train.

• • •

He made the appointment for a Monday and took the morning off so he could go with her. The analyst, a Dr. Salzman, had his office on Central Park West. While Jennie was inside, Michael sat in the waiting room adjacent to the

office, in one of a dozen chairs around a table bare except for ashtrays. There was no receptionist. After half an hour he heard the office door opening onto the small foyer, the doctor's reassuring murmur, and the sound of Jennie's footsteps coming toward the waiting room.

She looked tense and pale, gripping her purse with both hands.

"How'd it go?" he said.

"All right."

"You tell him I wanted to talk to him?"

"Yes."

"You okay?"

"I'm all right. He said for you to come straight in."

The office was very dim, lighted only by one small lamp on the desk. The blinds were closed, though outside it was a sunny morning. An air conditioner hummed quietly in the wall below the window. Beside a low couch, a box of Kleenex sat on the floor.

Michael took the chair in front of the desk. "I hope you don't mind my wanting to see you."

"I'm used to it," Dr. Salzman said. "Whenever a married patient enters therapy, the spouse invariably wants to see me. I suppose to make sure I have no horns." He was about fifty, with a receding hairline and horn-rimmed glasses. "I should tell you at the outset that it's not my practice to divulge anything told me by a patient—not even to that patient's spouse. And I discourage very seriously the impulse by the patient to discuss his or her analysis with anyone outside this room. If analysis is to be successful, it must be confined to the actual working of analyst and patient in the therapeutic situation. I do make a partial exception during this first interview—I can understand your concern, after all. But in the future I have to insist you not ask Jennie questions about her therapy or discuss it with her in any way. Do you follow me?"

"Of course. I understand."

"Now. I'm sure you have a lot of questions."

"Well—do you have an opinion? Have you formed any conclusions yet?"

"It's far too early for that, I'm afraid. I've seen the medical reports from Dr. Shapiro, and it *is* clear there is nothing physically wrong with her."

"That means it's her mind."

"Her problem undoubtedly has emotional roots, yes. But how serious it is remains to be seen. In general, I would say that hallucinations are never *not* serious. However, I'm far from convinced that Jennie's experiences are hallucinations. It just doesn't fit in with her medical history, her mental condition, or anything I've been able to determine about her."

"But can't you give me some idea how serious it is?"

"Oh, I would say the prognosis is very good. Jennie is bright, alert—except for these blackouts, these irrational episodes, she seems a healthy, sensible woman."

"Did she describe these hallucinations or whatever they are to you?"

"Yes, of course."

"The thing that struck me was that they all seem to take place in an earlier time. Horses and buggies and all that. I think this urge to move to the country had something to do with it. She came from farm country as a kid, and I think she has this idealized image of a rural past where life was good and everything was right."

Salzman allowed himself a smile. "She's not alone in that."

Michael shifted in the chair. There was something disconcerting about sitting in the dark like this. The light from the one lamp illuminated Salzman's face from below, like that of an interrogator engaged in the third degree. He could imagine how it must be sitting here as a patient. Especially if you had something to feel guilty about.

"Did Jennie say anything about my . . . about our life together?"

"Yes," Salzman said. "Certainly."

"Do you think that could have anything to do with all this?"

"If you'll clarify exactly what you're referring to . . . "

"Well, I mean, she must have told you I'd been seeing another woman before we left the city. Do you think that could have anything to do with the way she is?"

"It's a possibility."

"Could you elaborate on that?"

"Those dreams, or fantasies, this 'other world' she goes to. It seems to center around this young man. Now it's possible that he represents some romantic

ideal, that Jennie is creating some idealized romantic figure in her mind. That indicates to me that there may be something amiss in the way she feels about her marriage."

"That's very interesting. Because we've talked about this, she's told me how she feels. This man, for instance, the one she sees in the dreams or whatever they are, she says she feels very attracted to him. 'Like a young girl in love for the first time' is the way she described it. I've been thinking about that, and it seems to me she could be getting back at me this way, getting revenge for the affair I had."

Salzman smiled. "An interesting theory."

"Then you think there's something to it?"

"It's a possibility. Or her discovering your affair could have triggered something she's been repressing since early childhood. That of course is one of the areas I'll be working on with her, trying to illuminate as best I can."

"Yes, but assuming I'm right, why wouldn't she just get angry? How could it do this to her?"

"Repressed hostility can seek outlet in many ways, Mr. Logan. In our culture women especially have been taught not to express hostility. Jennie could be repressing her resentment, which then, naturally, would seek expression in some other form—in this case, the fantasies, or hallucinations. As you suggest, having a romantic *divertissement* in her mind as a way of punishing you. And, of course, even though it's subconscious, she would possess guilt for her resentment and hostility, so at the same time she would be punishing herself for it. Hence the blacking out, the fainting spells, the headaches. Of course, this is all theory, you understand. I don't know that this is the case."

"Well," Michael said. "What now? What should I do?"

"Nothing extraordinary. I've scheduled appointments with Jennie every Monday morning—she's said that's not inconvenient. At this point, I think it sufficient if she sees me once a week." Salzman got up and came around from the desk. "The most you can do is allow her the freedom to progress. Beyond that, I'd say treat her as any loving husband would—with affection and understanding."

8

THE SESSIONS WITH DR. SALZMAN, the acknowledgment that something was wrong with her, left Jennie feeling uneasy. She was grateful that he hadn't asked her to use the couch, with that ominous box of tissues on the floor beside it, but his placing her in a chair facing the wall in front of his desk was, in a different way, almost as bad. She felt exposed, unable as she was to see the reactions on his face. And when she did risk a glance in his direction, he seemed almost sinister, half hidden in the shadows from the little lamp on his desk.

He seemed, surprisingly, not very interested in the hallucinations. Those were symptoms, he said; constantly analyzing her symptoms would lead to nothing. He was much more interested in her childhood, in her relationship with her father—and, of course, her relationship with Michael. What, Dr. Salzman wanted to know, had she felt when she discovered Michael was having an affair? What did she really feel toward him now? She knew by now what the answer to that should be, but she couldn't honestly tell Dr. Salzman what he wanted to hear. And that, he suggested, could be the problem. That she wasn't feeling anger, even hostility, could mean those powerful repressed feelings were driving her into unreality.

Whenever she approached that subject, she found her mind shying away, wanting instead to drift toward the memory of her hallucinations. And that frightened her. Why, in spite of the fear, did she feel such nostalgia for that spectral grape arbor, that horse and buggy rushing toward her along the road, that carriage full of women climbing the hill? Why the spasm of excitement whenever she remembered the man she had seen each time it happened? Either something frighteningly supernatural was wrenching her out of her own world,

or she was going mad. So why then did she cling to the secret knowledge that she could make it happen again, that all she had to do was put on the dress?

She hadn't told Michael it was the dress which transported her into that other world. She hadn't, for that matter, told Dr. Salzman. Occasionally she would think that if she was sick, if everything she had experienced was a trick of her mind, then the dress itself had no power at all, it was only the device her subconscious used to bring on the hallucinations. If she brought it out in the open with Dr. Salzman it might rob the dress of whatever mythological power she had invested it with. But each time she acknowledged that, something within her recoiled. She couldn't give up the dress. Not now. Not yet.

Now she kept discovering within herself an insistent impulse to visit the local historical society. She kept remembering what the real estate broker had said: that the attic studio had been finished by a nineteenth-century painter and that Mrs. Bates at the historical society could probably tell her more about him. Through her sessions with Dr. Salzman, she had learned enough already to be wary of this sudden impulse; it felt suspiciously like what he called "resistance" to therapy. She vacillated for a week; then, reluctantly, she told him about it.

Surprisingly, he encouraged her to go. "If I understand you," he said, "you find yourself hoping this woman will somehow prove your hallucinations are real, is that correct?"

"I know it's silly," Jennie said, "but I can't get it out of my mind."

"I see no reason why you shouldn't talk to her," he said. "It could be beneficial in ridding your mind of that fantasy. I'd go and get it over with."

With his approval, she gave in to the impulse and went the very next day.

The historical society was housed in a large old three-story house on a tree-shaded corner. A sign on the lawn said CHESAPEQUA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. In the foyer, on an easel, stood a placard—*Paintings, by Gladys Moore*—with an arrow pointing into a room on the left. Straight ahead, through a half-open door, she saw a small office with a desk and a wall of filing cabinets. There was no one in the office, but she heard sounds in the room on her right. She went in and found herself in a small library.

A stout, elderly woman sat at a table near the window, smearing glue from a glue pot onto rental card envelopes and pasting them into a stack of books

beside her. On the opposite side of the table was a coffee percolator, cups, spoons, containers of cream and sugar. Seeing Jennie, the woman got up and came over to a desk near the door.

"Do come right in. I'm Mrs. Bates. May I help you?"

She was short and very stout. Tortoise-shell glasses, attached to a beaded chain around her neck, rested on her massive bosom. She wore a dark print dress that fell below her knees. Thick brown stockings stretched over her thin ankles.

Jennie hesitated. "I thought I'd browse around a bit. We've just moved here from the city and, well, I've become rather interested in the local history."

"If you'll just sign the register," Mrs. Bates said. "We like all our first-timers to sign the register so we can keep you informed of our events. We have exhibits sometimes—ceramics, crafts. Just now we have a nice exhibit of paintings; I suppose you saw the sign."

"I'd be more interested in the books, I guess."

"Well, you just browse to your heart's content. And in the meantime I'll make you out a card. And anytime you like, why, just help yourself to coffee."

Jennie strolled along between the rows of bookcases. There were four of them, barely chest high, running the length of the room. Two or three paintings—evidently of the town in its heyday—adorned the walls. Some chinaware was displayed in a glass-doored cabinet much like her own, which stood in one corner. The books were mostly general history of New York, not specifically about Chesapequa. *The Catskill Mountain House;* Edmund Wilson's *Upstate*; a picture book called *The Good Old Days.* She selected one called 19*th Century Houses in Western New York* and carried it to the table where the coffee was.

Mrs. Bates came over from the desk. "Here's your card, dear. That's just for withdrawing books of course. Our events are open to the public free of charge." She sat down across the table. "I see you've found a book. Are you interested in old houses?"

"We've just moved into an old house, and that kind of got me interested."

"That's wonderful," Mrs. Bates said. "We have many outstanding old houses in the area. It's so good to find someone interested. Most people take no interest, especially young people. Let me pour a cup of coffee, and we'll chat."

While Mrs. Bates did that, Jennie examined the room. The ceilings were very high, with wood paneling reaching halfway up the walls. "This is a very nice house," she said.

"It's lovely, but not nearly as old as some in town."

"Have you had the Society here long?"

"I've been here, oh my, for years. Right here on this corner. The town contributes a little, you know, and we're privately funded." The coffee prepared, she returned to her chair. "Now," she said, "if you're really interested in old houses, you'll have to take one of our brochures. I had quite a hand in compiling it. It lists all the really interesting houses by their location. Why, we have a house on Sycamore Street that was built as early as 1826. Of course, I find many of the newer houses even more interesting. Because of their stories, you know. Have you seen the old Chambers house? The big old three-story house like this one on the corner of Hudson and Bond Streets? Well, you want to go look at that house. There's a lot of interesting things have gone on in that house."

"Is there—do you have a book or something that tells some of the stories about the town? From the past, I mean?"

Mrs. Bates laughed. "Oh, my goodness, no. Though some of my friends keep saying I should write them down. I know stories—oh, my, there's very little I don't know about this town. And half the county, too." She chuckled. "Of course, some people would pay *not* to have them published. Go back far enough, you'll find a skeleton in anybody's closet. I sometimes think I should have been a writer, though. Do you know any writers, dear? I mean, you're from the city and all."

"I don't, no. I have a friend who's a magazine editor. She knows a few writers."

"Well, I often wonder if I couldn't have been a writer. I've always loved books and stories so. My Aunt Betty would tell me stories by the hour when I was a child. She raised me, my father's sister. Both my parents were killed, you see, in a train wreck. I was only three at the time, and Aunt Betty took me in and raised me. She's way up in her nineties now, her mind wanders, but she was a grand storyteller when I was a child."

"Did she tell you . . . stories about the town when she was young?"

"Oh, yes. This was a thriving town in her day, you know. Quite a lively summer resort. People from New York, wealthy people, spent whole summers here. We had three very good restaurants around the lake—quite acclaimed they were, for lake fish especially—and two excellent hotels. Do you know the Henry Hudson Hotel, dear? On Broad Street?"

"The really big one?"

"That's the one. Well, in the eighteen-nineties, the Henry Hudson was a splendid resort hotel, very popular with guests from the city. The others went, I'm afraid. The last one, the Ben Franklin, was torn down in the nineteen-thirties, but we managed to save the Hudson. That's the Ben Franklin there on the wall."

The black-framed photograph on the wall was greatly enlarged, nearly two feet square—a grainy shot of a wide, tree-lined street crowded with carriages and people, centered by a huge hotel with a long pillared porch running the entire width of the facade. "It looks like pictures I've seen of Saratoga," Jennie said.

"In those days many thought we would become another Saratoga," Mrs. Bates said. "We had the mineral springs and everything. But they say it was the gambling that did it—the town council wouldn't allow casinos or horse-racing, and that was one of the attractions of a major resort, you know. And then of course the whole era passed. But it was an interesting place then, Chesapequa. It's my one undying interest, the history of this town."

"I was wondering," Jennie said, "if you could tell me anything about the house we've bought."

"And which house would that be, dear?"

"Do you know the house on the other side of the lake, at the top of the hill? Where Summer House Road joins 8H?"

"Why, of course I know that house. That's one of our most interesting houses. Did you know a painter lived there once? An artist?"

"The real estate broker mentioned something about it."

"Oh my, yes. Way back in the eighteen-nineties it was. He was evidently very talented—studied in Paris and everything. Unfortunately, he died young, still unknown, and only one of his paintings survived. They say, on the

evidence of that one painting, that he could have been a very important American artist."

Jennie felt a small tremor of excitement begin in the pit of her stomach. "Could I—would it be possible to see the painting somewhere?"

"Why, we have it right here. The Society bought it several years ago, when old man Meade died. His family had had it for years, and when he died with nobody to leave it to, why, the committee—which is mostly me, dear—thought it should remain in the community. It has no intrinsic value to anyone else, of course. So we bought it and hung it in the committee room. Would you like to see it?"

"Yes. Yes, I would."

Mrs. Bates led her out into the hallway, past the open door of the office, and into a dim, smaller room with an oblong table in the center of it. The sun was coming directly through the high narrow windows at the far end of the room, shining in her eyes, and at first she couldn't see. Beside her, Mrs. Bates was chatting on about how beautiful the painting was and what a shame that all the others had been lost, but Jennie wasn't listening. She stepped farther into the room, out of the sun's glare. And then, on the far wall, she saw it.

It was a painting of her.

She was wearing the white dress, her blonde hair in an upsweep, standing half-turned away in the dappled shade of the tree at the rear corner of the house, looking back over her shoulder at the vantage point of the artist. Despite the impressionistic brushstrokes, she recognized her face, her mouth, her cheekbones, and the long sweep of the dress with its high lacy collar and ballooning sleeves.

"Isn't she pretty?" Mrs. Bates said. "You look remarkably like her. Put you in that dress and your hair in the same kind of upsweep . . . Are you all right, dear? You're so pale."

Jennie felt suddenly cold; dizziness swelled and sucked at her insides. She grasped Mrs. Bates' arm. "Could I lie down somewhere?"

"There's a couch in the office. Really, dear, you're awfully pale." Mrs. Bates guided her into the office and laid her down on the couch. "Are you all right, dear?" she said, hovering over her. "Can I get you something? Water? Aspirin?"

"Please, could I have a glass of water?"

She didn't want the water, but she wanted Mrs. Bates to go away. She closed her eyes, letting the dizziness sweep through her. Something inside her was threatening to veer out of control. The painting was like a living presence in the other room, vibrating through the walls, unmistakable evidence that everything she had experienced was real, that what was happening to her was more than just a trick of the mind, and it was all she could do to keep from fainting right where she was. A faucet squeaked somewhere in the back of the house, followed by the rush of water in the sink. The sound of footsteps approaching brought her eyes open. She didn't want to deal with Mrs. Bates' questions; she didn't want to talk—or even to think. She wanted only to go away from that frightening painting.

She was struggling into a sitting position when Mrs. Bates came in with the glass of water.

"Feeling better?"

"Yes, thank you." She drank some of the water. "I've been having these fainting spells. They only last a minute, then I'm all right." She handed the glass back and stood up. "I have to go now."

"You're sure you should go?" Mrs. Bates said, following her to the door. "Maybe you should lie down a little longer. Can you drive?"

"I'm all right now. It's happened before. They go away."

"I do hope you've seen a doctor."

"Oh, yes," Jennie said. "Thank you for helping me." Then she turned and fled out toward the car.

9

SHE DIDN'T TELL MICHAEL. As soon as he got home he hurried her off to a Little League baseball game she had forgotten they were going to—the son of a fellow commuter was the star pitcher and to have begged off would have raised questions she was not prepared to answer. She crouched with the mothers in the small bleachers, watching Michael with the fathers down along the first-base line, talking, laughing, a can of beer in his hand. He was beginning to make friends here, and she should have been glad, but right now entering into the social life of this town was the last thing she wanted. How could she talk to these plain, sensible housewives beside her about visions that seemed to propel her into a mysterious past, about a painting of her done half a century before she was born?

If it was her. It was true that Mrs. Bates had seen nothing out of the ordinary; she had remarked on the similarity but beyond that had noticed nothing strange. But Mrs. Bates didn't know. "Put you in that dress," she had said; Mrs. Bates didn't know that she had worn that dress, that it hung in her closet right now, in her upstairs bedroom.

The next day, trying to occupy her mind, she began work on a terrarium she had been planning for the attic studio. She was glad Michael had been too rushed to notice how nervous she was at breakfast; if he had pressed her she would have had to tell him about the painting, and she knew what he would have said to that: that it was all in her mind, another sign of mental imbalance. And she didn't need that; she was already too upset to concentrate on her work as it was. Beverly called around ten-thirty to say hello and to invite her to Fire Island for the weekend, but she declined.

"I just don't feel up to it, Bev. Give me a raincheck?"

"Uh oh, kid. Don't tell me you're having problems again. Tell that big lout you're married to I have my eye on him. If he steps out of line again, I'll see he's drawn and quartered."

"Michael's been fine, Bev. I'm just kinda down."

"Weekend at the beach doesn't tempt you?"

"Not the way I feel, I'm afraid."

"Well, maybe next time. Take care."

"Thanks anyway," Jennie said, and hung up.

She wished Beverly was the kind of person she could talk to about what was happening. She couldn't talk to Michael, she couldn't talk to Beverly; there was only Dr. Salzman, and she doubted she could tell even him what had happened. Though he never used the word, he would surely believe, as Michael would, that she was going mad.

She was still trying to concentrate on the terrarium that afternoon when she heard a car pull into the driveway. It was an old Dodge sedan, '47 or '48, in immaculate condition. Mrs. Bates got out and came across the yard toward the house, stout and stiff as if even that short walk were too much for her. It was an unwelcome reminder of the shock at the historical society, but she forced herself to put on a calm exterior and went for the door.

"Mrs. Bates," she said. "What a pleasant surprise."

Mrs. Bates peered up at her, hands clutching a purse across her stout midsection. "I hope I'm not being a bother to you, Mrs. Logan, but I just had to come see if you were all right. You were so pale and sickly-looking when you left yesterday I said to myself, I said, I never should have let her go like that, so weak and all. And I've been just a-beating myself for it ever since. So I had to come see if you were all right."

"That's very kind of you, Mrs. Bates. Won't you come in?"

"Well, just for a minute. I don't want to be a bother."

In the kitchen, Mrs. Bates shed her gloves and purse on the buffet near the door. She was wearing a mottled brown suit, though it was hot enough outside for shirt-sleeves, and a black pillbox hat with a tiny veil perched squarely on her head.

"Oh, my," she said, peering through her glasses, "haven't you fixed it up nice. Warm and sunny with those yellow curtains and all. I suppose Mr. Logan

is away to work?"

"Yes. Michael commutes to New York. Would you like to see the rest of the house?"

"Could I? I haven't been in this house in I don't know how long. I knew the Thompsons that lived here, but it's been, oh, a good twenty years ago now."

The big picture windows in the living room had evidently been installed in the last twenty years: they hadn't been there when Mrs. Bates had last seen the house. They did brighten up the living room, though, didn't they? And the view—you couldn't beat this house for the view. She didn't approve of the way the central foyer had been removed, though, to open up the dining room and the stairway. "I do hate to see these old houses changed any more than necessary," she said. "It's the old things that give them their charm." She declined an invitation to look at the upstairs, due to her difficulty in climbing stairs, but she was very happy to see they had kept the corner cupboard. "That's a really valuable piece, you know. Been in this house for close on to a hundred years, they say."

Back in the kitchen, she accepted the offer of a cup of tea and sat down at the table where Jennie had been working.

"Oh, you're making a terrarium," she said. "Is that partridgeberry? My Aunt Betty had a terrarium with partridgeberry in it. They were very popular in her youth, you know."

Jennie brought the tea across to the table. "This one's going to have all kinds of things in it. Partridgeberry, spotted wintergreen, princess pine, club moss. I want it to look like a miniature rain forest."

"Is that moss damp, dear? I hope I haven't interrupted you. You just go right on, before that moss dries out."

"It doesn't matter. I can dampen it again."

"No, you go right ahead. I'm just a talker. I'd love to watch you work while we talk."

"Well, I guess I can get that moss covered before it dries."

While Jennie laid gravel in the bottom of the terrarium for drainage, and began adding soil, Mrs. Bates reached to the saucer where Jennie had cut a lemon into quarters.

"I do hope you're feeling better," she said.

"Oh, yes. It's nothing really. But it was good of you to look in on me."

"I did want to make sure you were all right. And then, of course, I didn't get a chance to finish what I was telling you yesterday. I was going to tell you the story behind the house."

"Yes?" Jennie wasn't sure now she wanted to hear the story behind the house.

Mrs. Bates folded the lemon quarter around the tip of her spoon and carefully squeezed the juice into her tea. "Yes, that young painter I told you about, David Reynolds his name was, who did that painting you saw—remarkable how much you look like her. Well, you see, that was his wife in that painting." She lifted her cup and took a sip. "Oh, my, this is very good tea. Did you buy this in New York?"

"Yes. There was a little shop right near where we lived. They specialized in different kinds of tea from all over the world."

"That's something I'll bet you'll miss. Not that we don't have nice little shops here in Chesapequa, but that variety, that's something you'll find only in New York. Now, where was I?"

"The woman in the painting. You said it was his wife?"

"Yes, well, he had been in France, you see, studying painting. Knocked about there for about a year, I guess. And then he came back, oh, in 1899 I think it was, to marry his sweetheart. I never did hear how he'd met her or how long they'd known each other, but in 1899 they got married." Mrs. Bates set her cup down and looked at Jennie. "Well, then she died."

She evidently expected some reaction, but Jennie's mind was elsewhere, glad the woman in the painting had been identified. If it was known to be the artist's wife, then it couldn't possibly be her.

"They got married," Mrs. Bates went on, "had the wedding reception right out there in that yard, and then as they were getting ready to go away, on the honeymoon, you know, one of the horses went wild. Just went wild, rearing and out of control. And it killed her—his bride. A hoof struck her in the head and killed her instantly." Mrs. Bates shook two pills from a tiny pillbox, popped them into her mouth, and followed them down with a sip of tea. "Well, David Reynolds, the story goes, went a little crazy after that. Very distraught, of course. Rumor was he began to lose his mind. Hallucinating,

you know. Claimed he saw his bride come back. He'd be driving a buggy down the road and suddenly there she'd be, in that same dress she'd worn when she died, the one you saw in the painting."

Jennie felt a shock as though something had sucked the breath right out of her lungs. Suddenly clear in her mind was the image of herself standing on that narrow dirt road, in the long white dress, with the buggy coming toward her, the *clop-clop-clop* of the horse's hooves sending sprays of dust into the air; the man in the buggy staring at her, the lash of the whip as he drove the horse directly toward her. She had been scooping soil into the bottom of the terrarium with a tablespoon; now she realized the spoon was trembling violently in her hand. Carefully, she placed it on the table and sat down in her chair.

"She'd appear," Mrs. Bates was saying, "but as soon as he'd try to get close to her, she'd disappear. Well, he always was a loner, David Reynolds, never had many friends, the story goes, and of course being in Paris all that time he'd lost touch with most of them, but what friends he had, they began to worry about him. They could see he was losing his mind, addled by the death of his bride on their wedding day, and they tried to get him to come out of it, tried to get him to consult a specialist in New York."

Jennie thought dimly of Dr. Salzman and hugged herself, spellbound.

"Well," Mrs. Bates said, "David Reynolds always had been something of a firebrand, too, a pretty independent man, and he wouldn't listen. He broke off contact with what friends he had left and became something of a recluse. Well, shortly after that the story was that he took up with some other woman. They were seen together around town, though I guess they were discreet about it, and it caused quite a little scandal, him taking up with the other woman so soon after his wife's death."

Mrs. Bates paused for another sip of tea, and, impatient, Jennie asked, "What happened?"

"Well, that's the sad thing, the end of the story. Nobody knows what really happened—it's been an unsolved mystery to this very day. Some suspected it was the woman he took up with, some thought it was his father-in-law, a bitter old man who had opposed the marriage, but one night a short time after his wife died, he was found shot and killed—murdered, they say."

"Murdered?"

"Yes, and nobody ever found out who did it. There was evidently considerable suspicion directed toward his father-in-law—it was known there was no love lost between them. But then, too, the woman he'd taken up with was seen leaving the scene of the crime, and many believe she did it. But nothing was ever proved, one way or the other."

Jennie hid her trembling hands in her lap. Something like panic had been growing in her all through the latter half of Mrs. Bates' story; now, added to it, caught up in it and sweeping with it through all the length and breadth of her body, surprising and unnerving her with its power, was a sudden onslaught of grief. That man was again alive in her mind—the penetrating blue of his eyes as he had lashed the horse toward her along that narrow dirt road, the gentle melancholy way he had fondled the dog that day she had seen him from the upstairs window, the agonized look on his face as he had called to her from the boat on the lake—and dimly she thought, *him? he was murdered?* Trembling, real pain thickening her throat, she said, "What . . . what was his wife's name?"

"Well, now let me think." Mrs. Bates stirred her tea, gazing down into it as if she might find the answer there. She tapped the spoon dry on the edge of the cup and returned it to the saucer. "I believe it was . . . Pamela." She took a sip of the tea. "Yes, I think that was it. Her name was Pamela."

10

"It's a coincidence, Jennie," Michael said. "So this woman's name was Pamela. It's a coincidence."

Jennie sat on the couch in the living room, turned away from him, staring out the window. Hazy red clouds streaked the western horizon. The world outside was filled with that immense silence that always seemed to fall after the sun went down. She heard Michael shifting in his chair across the room, but she didn't turn. All afternoon, since Mrs. Bates had left, she had been in an unreal daze, her mind closed down around some core of control, holding away her fear. Not even telling Michael had brought her out of it.

"What about seeing her from a buggy on the road?" she said. "That actually happened to me. There's no way that woman could have known."

"From what you said, what's-her-name, Mrs. Bates, didn't say he saw her standing in the road. She said he began to see her. That—to quote, if I remember right—he'd be driving down the road and there she'd be. Now you don't know what actually happened. If people hear he saw her after she died and it gets passed down by word of mouth for over seventy-five years, it's bound to get distorted. For all you know he may have seen her floating in the trees like a ghost."

Twilight was creeping across the lake. Already the trees along the road had lost their distinctive shapes and become a single dark mass. She felt that if she just concentrated on the slow change from day to dusk outside she could cope with what threatened to become panic if she opened her mind to it. It was too much to assimilate; it couldn't be coincidence; there were too many coincidences.

"Did you hear what I said, Jennie?"

She struggled to make sense of what he had said, but she could hardly think at all. She didn't want to think. The possibilities were frightening.

"You'd rather I believe I'm losing my mind, I know."

"Oh, Jennie, what do you want me to believe, that you're some kind of backward reincarnation? I might just as well believe in those poltergeists or parallel universes Beverly was talking about. Do you really want me to believe you've fallen in love with a man who's been dead a hundred years? I mean, we might as well talk about it. I remember what you said, how these things make you feel, how you're attracted to . . . to this man. It's pretty clear to me what's happening. You're creating some ideal man in your mind, some man you can throw in my face. Well, let's talk about it. If you're still bitter about what I did, let's bring it out in the open."

"See," she said, "you're really worried I might be in love with another man." She turned to look at him, anger flushing her face. It was true: she was still bitter.

"Oh, hell," he said, "not with a man who's a figment of your imagination. Or some failed painter a hundred years dead."

"He's not failed. Mrs. Bates said he could have been very successful."

"Might have been."

"*Would* have been."

"Listen to us. Arguing about some imaginary man you've made up."

"I didn't make him up. There was a David Reynolds."

He stopped for a moment, then rubbed a hand across his face. "Now *I'm* getting confused."

She turned back to the window, feeling the anger subside. She hadn't known she had so much anger in her. And it frightened her, because it was what Dr. Salzman had been saying all along. Her reaction to Michael's affair was unnatural, he said. There had to be anger buried deep inside her; that was what had caused all those headaches, all that nervousness and anxiety before they moved from the city. And it was unhealthy, Dr. Salzman said; unrecognized and unreleased anger could do very unhealthy things to the mind. She tried to look at that possibility head-on. But that was the most frightening thing of all. Because if it were true, it meant she really was losing her mind.

"Look, Jennie," Michael said. "The analyst explained all this. He practically *said* you were creating this man to punish me. Let's admit it. I deserve it. I was a bastard. And I'm sorry. I'd do anything in the world if I could undo all that. And I'm trying. But you have to face the fact that that's what it is. It's a fleeing from reality. Hell, the move from the city was a kind of fleeing from reality. That's what started all this."

"So now my wanting to leave the city was a crazy act, was it?"

Michael sighed. "Jennie, I'm trying to help you. Can't you see that? It hurts me to see this happening to you. You've been so good since you started seeing the analyst. No fainting, no hallucinations. Now this. If you allow this coincidence to influence your mind, you're going to get worse. Can't you see I love you, that I just want you to get well?"

She wanted to go to him, to put her arms around him and tell him she loved him, too, but something held her back. She remembered the sweet thrill she felt every time she put on the dress, the peaceful beauty of that other time—and that man, who, every time she saw him, brought that tender yearning alive inside her. She didn't want to believe that was unreal, all a figment of her imagination. The truth was that she wanted to believe she was being transported into the past.

She heard Michael get up and cross the room, felt the couch shift as he sat down beside her.

"Jennie," he said, "I love you. I only want you to be all right. Can't you see that?"

She buried her head against his chest. "Yes, Michael, I know. I'm sorry. It just upset me, the coincidence. I know you love me. I do want to get better. I so wanted life in the country to be good for us."

It was full dusk now; the shadows were growing darker in the room. She closed her eyes, trying to feel grateful to him, trying to believe that he was right, that it was all a terrible coincidence. But inside, in her mind's eye, she could still see that intense, moody man—the somber face, the coal-black hair, those brilliant blue eyes. David, she thought, tasting the name on her tongue, *David Reynolds*.

• • •

Dr. Salzman discounted Mrs. Bates' story, though he seemed very interested when Jennie told him about it. It was difficult under the best of circumstances to read his expression, but even from the corner of her eye, in the dim light of the single lamp, he seemed genuinely startled. But he discouraged any attempt to read into it more than a simple coincidence would support.

"I think we've made definite progress in explaining these irrational episodes you've been having," he said. "This coincidence does not in any way make our analysis less accurate or less valid. But your suggesting it might is, I think, important."

Patiently, he led her to admit that deep down she still wanted to believe her hallucinations were real. And that, he said, was an indication of how dangerous this coincidence could be. Something in her wanted to escape into hallucination. The question was—what did she want to escape from? What she had to do was delve into the roots of her sickness. It was a sickness, she shouldn't lose sight of that fact. Painful as it might be, she had to confront her real attitude toward Michael and her marriage.

She didn't discuss her problem with Michael anymore. Dr. Salzman discouraged it, and anyway they had come dangerously close to arguing. And her marriage certainly needed no added fuel for conflict. But that left little for them to talk about. It was as if the problem were an obstacle between them, and in avoiding it they had closed themselves off from each other.

To avoid thinking, dreaming, fantasizing, she tried to lose herself in work on the attic room, but working with her hands only freed her mind, increased the impulse to dream. And so before she knew it, she would be remembering that horse and buggy *clop-clopping* toward her along that narrow dirt road, or herself luminous and shimmering in that painting on the wall, or Mrs. Bates' rambling voice describing how David Reynolds had seen his bride appear before him in the very dress in which she had died. I'm a figure out of his dreams, she would think; I must seem very eerie to him. What was he like, a man who knew the Paris of Zola and Cézanne, who had never seen a movie or an airplane, who lived in a world that had never known world war or hydrogen bombs? Each time she remembered his face she would feel again that stir of warm and passionate excitement. And she would remember then that he was fated to die very soon, and she could not escape the feeling that, somehow, she

was meant to save his life. She had been told the story of his approaching death, she was being propelled back into his time, to him. Surely all that had a purpose, surely she was being sent back to change history, to ensure that he would live.

These thoughts stayed with her all day long and pursued her into sleep, until sometimes she woke in the night uncertain whether the dream she had just emerged from was real or a hallucination or just a simple dream; and it was then, waking, examining her dream, that she believed most strongly that the "hallucinations" were real, because they so overpowered these pale imitations she recognized, under examination, as simple dreams. She would stir and turn then, trying to go back to sleep, but increasingly sleep refused to come and she would lie awake into the long dawns, restless, trying to avoid the inescapable truth: nostalgia for that other world loomed in her mind, and no amount of psychoanalysis was going to dispel it.

The urge to go back was on her as strongly as the need of an addict for his drug.

11

ON THE FIRST THURSDAY after she finished the attic room, she went back.

She hadn't planned it. She woke that morning in an unfamiliar daze, lying on her back, staring at the ceiling. Michael, up early to catch the train to the city, urged her to stay in bed; he would make himself breakfast. She heard him puttering about in the kitchen, the squeak of the faucet as he filled the pot for coffee, but her mind seemed locked in thought, preparing itself for something beyond her control. When she heard the station wagon ease out of the driveway, some instinct got her out of bed. In the bathroom, unseeing eyes stared back at her from the mirror. She dressed and went downstairs.

On the table were the remains of Michael's breakfast: an egg-smeared plate, knife, fork, a half-emptied cup of coffee. Methodically, she carried them to the sink, washed and dried them, returned them to the cupboards. Moving dully, as if in a trance, she went through the living room, plumping pillows, returning magazines to their racks. When there was nothing left to do, she removed her apron and went slowly back up the stairs.

In the bedroom, she took the dress from its hanger and laid it across the bed, glowing white and beautiful against the dark bedspread. She brought her boots from the closet and placed them beside the bed. Then she undressed and folded her clothes in neat squares, as if that were very important. At the dressing table, she began putting up her hair, mechanically fixing it atop her head. Then she went to the bed and began putting on the dress.

When she had buttoned up the last button at the back of her neck, she stepped to the full-length mirror. The image reflected back at her was itself like a painting: a slender woman in a shimmering white dress, standing out in stark relief in the shadowy room, her hair shining like dull burnished gold, her face

soft and mysterious in the dim light. Through her haze came a tremor of apprehension: she was offering herself to the unknown, submitting her will to a power she did not understand, for a purpose she could not be sure of, and for an instant a surge of fear struggled to free itself inside her, then was stifled again in the grip of that trance-like haze.

Still moving as if in a trance, she went out along the hall and started down the stairs. The house was eerily silent. Sunlight streamed in through the windows along the dining-room wall; the panes of the windows seemed clear as icy air. At the foot of the stairs, she paused, waiting. Nothing happened. She went through the dining room and into the kitchen. Again she stopped. Again nothing changed. The coffee pot still stood on the stove. Through the window, she could see her red Volkswagen shining in the sun. Still in that strange daze, she picked up her skirts and went out through the kitchen door.

Outside, the sky was a clear and brittle blue, and the sun came almost blinding off the stones of the patio. The trees bordering the opposite edge of the patio stretched trembling shadows toward her. The only sound was the insistent, monotonous singing of an insect somewhere up in the trees. Tense, expectant, she took a step out toward the patio. Another. And another. And then she felt it: the faint beginnings of the ache at the back of her neck, growing very rapidly into an intense band of pain running from her shoulder up into her temple. She closed her eyes against the pain, feeling the rush of dizziness, the welling of nausea in her stomach, and now the fear surged up, sweeping through her, violent and uncontrollable.

And then the pain was gone. The fear still beat inside her, like the wild rhythms of a warning bell, but even with her eyes still closed, she was immediately aware of the change. The trance-like haze had abruptly dropped away, her mind was sharp and clear. She felt a damp wind on her face, with a smell of earth on it, a smell of animals.

She opened her eyes, and the change took her breath away. The patio was gone. The trees on the other side of the patio were gone. The sky was gray, dark clouds scudding along beneath a higher layer of overcast. A cool wind rattled the leaves of four big oaks standing in a row along a rail fence directly across the yard from her. The garage was gone, and in its place stood a kind of carriage house, with a slanted roof. The Volkswagen was gone from the

driveway, and the driveway was different: a simple dirt path looping into a turn-around beside the house.

The wind kicked up a little dust devil in the dirt where the drive passed in front of the carriage house. The leaves rustled again in the trees. And then, from around the corner of the carriage house, she heard it: the *chink-chink-chink* of a hammer striking metal. Excitement boiled up in her. She waited, tense, the wind damp and cool on her face. It came again—*chink-chink-chink:* someone working with a hammer behind the carriage house.

She realized her hands were trembling. She pressed them to her face and felt her whole body quivering. Every nerve in her body seemed awake, waiting, so that she thought she could detect each separate tingle on every minute bit of flesh, could hear the air molecules striking against the drum of her ear; the thump of her heart was a convulsion, a desperate writhing to escape the confines of her chest; and, suddenly recognizing the extent of her panic, she forced herself to think: each time before, it had been the panic which had broken the spell, had plucked her out of the past back into the present. This time she would have to fight it, would have to keep herself under control.

She stood for a moment longer, trying to calm herself. Gradually, her heart slowed, her quivering subsided. She took her hands from her face and held them out before her, almost willing the trembling away. Then, resolutely, she began to walk toward the corner of the carriage house.

She rounded the corner and stopped, her heart suddenly leaping up in her again. He stood with his back to her, hammering at a bolt in the shaft of the buggy parked along the wall. Excitement and panic fought within her again, and in the blur of her mind she was dimly aware of his broad back beneath a gray shirt, long legs in dark trousers tucked into high black boots. Her breathing seemed so loud in her ears she thought he must surely hear it. Her hands were trembling again, violently; she clasped them together at her waist. She felt a quivering in her breast, the tingling of her flesh, and was dimly astonished that within the excitement she felt was something almost sexual.

He had freed the bolt from the buggy shaft and was turning it in his hand, examining it. Gradually the panic subsided a little, and she felt seeping into her that same tender yearning he had created in her each time she had seen

him before, and suddenly it seemed the most natural thing in the world to speak the words that came unbidden from her mouth.

"David?" she said. "David Reynolds?"

She saw him start. He stood as if struck by a bullet, one hand, poised to set the hammer down, halted in mid-air. For a long moment, he seemed turned to stone; then, carefully, as if it were something that might shatter, he set the hammer on the floor of the buggy-box and turned.

His face was white. His eyes were wide, a brilliant blue, staring. She attempted a trembly smile, feeling the panic retreat before that sweet tenderness welling up in her.

"Pamela?" he said tentatively. "Pamela?"

Abruptly he threw the bolt in the buggy seat and started toward her.

The panic rushed back into her again and, involuntarily, she thrust her hands up to ward him off and backed away. "Please don't. I won't leave if you don't frighten me."

He stopped, emotions shifting in rapid array across his face.

"Please," she heard herself say, "I want to help you."

He stood not ten feet away, his high wide collar open at the throat, his sleeves rolled up above muscular forearms. She was dimly aware of a mounting elation rising inside her: she was actually here, talking to him, this man she had seen from afar so many times, to whom fate had sent her back through almost a hundred years, whose life seemed so entangled in her own. Who created in her that lovely, fluttery feeling she was aware of even now. She ventured a step toward him. And then, as she watched, she saw some of the brilliance die away in his eyes, disappointment coming like a shadow across his face.

"You're not Pamela," he said.

"No." It was almost a whisper.

His face was changing, closing over the openness, the hope, that had shown nakedly a moment before. But his eyes were still alive, searching hers—direct, intimate.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Jennifer. Jennifer Logan." She kept her eyes on his, a small voice inside her pleading: please don't be disappointed; don't withdraw from me; I was meant to come here, I know it. "They call me Jennie."

"Jennie," he said, and sank slowly onto the running board of the buggy. "That dress. Where did you—?"

"I had it made for myself. From a dressmaker."

"You don't know about me? About my—?"

"I didn't when I ordered the dress made. But I do now."

She was aware now of a horse grazing in the field beyond the fence, the squeal of a pig from somewhere near the barn. Dark shreds of cloud raced eastward overhead. The horizon had become black and ominous. A flash of sheet lightning flickered once through the black and disappeared.

"Was that you I saw those other times?" he said. "On the road? At the lake?"

"Yes."

He looked away. "I was so sure. So sure."

She looked at the buggy—slim metal fenders arching over the high wheels, the tufted leather seat, the long shafts slanting down to the ground. This was the buggy she had seen that day on the road, the buggy he had pursued her in, whipping the horse on, calling after her another woman's name. It was like encountering an apparition out of one's dreams.

"Why did you run?" he said. "You always ran away."

"You frightened me. You were so intense, coming at me, calling me Pamela. I didn't know who Pamela was then."

Again she felt that flash of awe and elation, the wonder at the fact that she was actually here in—if Mrs. Bates was correct—in 1899, talking to the man she had for weeks been seeing in what everyone had tried to convince her were hallucinations. The thought sent excitement quivering through her again.

"But where did you run to?" he said. "I looked for you."

"I hid. I hid from you. I was so frightened." The question made her apprehensive, but her answer seemed to satisfy him.

"I thought you were a ghost," he said. "Pamela's ghost. I even thought, once, I saw her watching me from an upstairs window. But when I ran upstairs there was no one there." From behind the barn came the squeal of a pig, quick and short, dwindling away into grunting, then silence. "You haven't been in Chesapequa long then?"

"No."

"How did you learn about Pamela?"

"A woman in town told me."

"They thought I was going mad." He gazed again across the fence to the field beyond, where the horse leisurely cropped grass under the gloomy sky. "I thought so, too."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry I wasn't Pamela. I wish I could have been."

At that, he turned his passionate gaze full on her face again. Sometimes, like now, when he searched her eyes to read her thoughts, his gaze was so nakedly direct it was almost sexual. It made her own eyes go naked, too, and she sensed the communication passing unspoken between them.

"What did you mean, you want to help me?" he said.

"I heard about . . . about what you thought, seeing me. I wanted you to know you weren't . . . going mad, like the others thought." And, she thought, I want to save your life.

He got up from the buggy. "I'm sorry. I'm not being civil. Will you come into the house? May I offer you something?"

She felt a tremor of excitement inside. "Thank you. That would be nice."

He scooped up a jacket that had been draped across the buggy seat and escorted her back across the yard toward the house. She was aware now of bare patches in the grass, a row of hollyhocks growing along the kitchen wall, a large porch running along the front—which surprised her until she remembered the real estate broker had mentioned a porch which had been dismantled when the house was renovated. The kitchen door was covered by a screen; he held it open and placed a hand on her elbow to guide her through. His touch brought a swift thrill of pleasure deep in her stomach.

Inside, she stopped, awed. Against the far wall stood a tall cast-iron kitchen range, every inch of its frontal surface gleaming with an elaborate nickel scrollwork of vines and flowers. It seemed equipped with a dozen dampers, grates, and shelves; on its bulbous oven door was inscribed the brand name: Victoria. On the oak table stood a kerosene lamp with three tall fluted chimneys. In the corner was a tall, dark grandfather clock, its long pendulum *tock-tocking* regularly back and forth. But what caught her eye, what stopped her breath in her throat, was the glass-doored cupboard standing upright in the opposite corner. It was the same cupboard which stood in her own kitchen, in

her own time. And the glass doors were broken precisely as her own had been—the left pane completely gone, leaving only jagged splinters around the edges, cracks radiating outward from a large tear-shaped hole in the right. Now she saw that the doors of some of the other cupboards were broken, too—the mantle of the sideboard splintered off, a handle ripped away from a drawer.

"I'm sorry the room is such a shambles," he said. "I'm afraid I did it considerable damage."

"You did this?"

"The night after . . . after Pamela died. I was in a rage, I couldn't help myself. I smashed everything in the room."

"A rage—?"

"At God, I suppose. For taking her." He smiled, as if apologizing. "It didn't help."

While he made tea, she sat at the table, awed, remembering that night: the sound of smashing glass from the kitchen, her panic in the dark, and following Michael downstairs to discover the doors of her corner cupboard shattered. And here it stood, the same cupboard, its doors smashed just as it was then, in that other time. And here, boiling water at the stove, was the man who had done it. She imagined him as he must have been, mad with grief, venting his frustrated rage on everything in this kitchen; and in her own kitchen, the corner cupboard sitting quietly until, having been struck in his time, it had shattered in hers. Somehow, the strength of his emotion had reached into the future, to her, just as her own emotion, while in the dress, brought her back into the past, to him.

He finished making the tea and brought two steaming cups to the table. Now that she was here, in this house, she felt awkward. She looked down at her cup. She could feel that hint of a blush on her cheeks. He must think her very strange; surely women in 1899 did not come unannounced and unaccompanied to visit alone with a man. Whatever the circumstances. The silence in the room was making her uncomfortable. She looked up—into his direct, intense eyes. He had the most unguarded face she had ever seen, yet there was something in his openness that radiated strength and force: he was not afraid of strong emotions.

Then she did blush. "You must think me very improper."

"Why?" His gaze never left her face. "Because you came here? I'm grateful. At least now I know I am not going mad."

She grasped at that straw. "I had heard you'd broken off with your friends because they believed that. About going mad, I mean. I felt obligated to come, knowing I was the cause of it."

"Friends," he said. "They don't know what it is to desire something strongly. They couldn't understand that I would have welcomed madness if it had brought her back to me." He stopped, as if to check his passion. "Forgive me. I've been too long alone with these feelings." A brief smile flashed under his moustache. "I'm afraid I've forgotten the amenities of social intercourse."

Uncertain how to respond, she looked down again, fiddling with her cup.

"You must understand that your coming was something of a shock to me," he said. "And, in a strange way, a disappointment. Since that first day on the road, seeing you, I've lived in a kind of unreal fever. I thought that somehow Pamela had found her way back to me, in whatever form the afterlife allows us. I was prepared to believe in anything—ghosts, spirits, the devil himself—if it would bring her back to me. So you see I cannot be too happy to learn that I was wrong."

"I'm sorry."

"And I'm sorry. It's just that, for a few days, a few weeks, that gave me hope. However bizarre." He smiled again. "You must forgive me. You see me in a difficult time."

"There's no need to forgive you. You didn't ask me to come. I came because . . . because I chose to."

His eyes held hers for a moment. "I'm glad you came."

"I'm glad, too," she said. The force of his gaze sent a spasm of excitement through her; her hand trembled as she set the cup down, and she felt the heat of a blush rising to her face. She was abruptly aware of her breathing, quick and agitated, of a faint dizziness beginning to spin in her head; panic nipped at her throat at the thought that she might be about to disappear before his eyes. She felt the room blur, blood draining from her face.

"You're very pale," he said. "Are you all right?"

She rose abruptly from the table. "I don't feel well. I had better go."

"Can I get you something?"

"No. Please. I have to go."

She wanted desperately to run, but she forced herself to walk to the door, where he stopped her, touched her gently on the arm. "You'd better wait. Let me drive you home. I'll have to fix the buggy, but—"

"No. Please. I can't explain, but I have to go alone." Panic was beating in her ears. She was only dimly aware of him beside her, his hand on her arm, opening the door for her. "Promise me," she said, fighting the dizziness. "Please don't follow me."

"You'll come again?"

"Yes. Tomorrow. Please. I can't explain. . . . "

"I won't follow."

She forced herself to walk to the corner of the house; and then she was running, skirts clutched up in one hand. She was dimly aware of the grape arbor, the tree at the back of the yard; clutching the hedge on each side, she darted down the flagstone steps and ran along the narrow dirt road toward the curve at the brow of the hill. After only a few steps the dizziness overcame her, and she sank to her knees, her head in her hands, nausea welling up in her, heart hammering in her chest, afraid she would faint dead away if it did not stop.

And then it stopped. Suddenly. The nausea was gone; the dizziness faded quickly away. The world around her seemed very quiet. Her face still buried in her hands, she felt hardness under her feet. Pavement. From above her head came a faint steady hum. She lifted her head. The smooth paved road stretched away before her, toward the shady length of Summer House Road. The hum was coming from a transformer box on an electric pole beside the road.

Slowly she stood up. The scrape of her boots against the pavement seemed very loud. She looked back toward the steps leading up to the yard. The house stood fat and innocent in the sun. A tremor of wonder grew inside her, rose to a quivering elation. It was real; he was real; she had actually gone back and seen him, talked to him, felt his touch on her arm. Hugging herself, she twirled in an ecstatic circle on the road, the white skirts swishing about her legs, elation singing through her.

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That night she sat at the table after dinner, watching Michael read the latest copy of Esquire. He had edged the chair out away from the table, his legs crossed, the magazine in his lap, one hand playing with a lock of hair above his ear. Every now and then he would turn a page and reach for the cup and take a sip of coffee; then he would return to playing with his hair, his attention never having left the page. She had been watching him for some time, filled with a kind of odd, distant affection. He seemed changed, or she, having experienced what she had, was seeing him now with changed eyes. How she wanted to tell him what had happened to her. But even if he could believe it was real, she couldn't tell him. How could she tell him that she was in love with David Reynolds, that for the first time in her life she knew what love was?

It was strange—he would feel betrayed, and yet she knew she didn't want to hurt him, wanted only to share the experience with him. Somehow her feeling for him hadn't changed, and she knew now that that meant she was not in love with him, had never been in love with him. She was fond of him, but there had never been that emotion so strong it felt like a hand twisting in her insides. It had never been love, and she knew now that he would never be able to understand what love was.

That knowledge made her faintly sad. She felt she had grown in this experience; she knew more than he did now, and she knew she had to conceal it from him, to protect him.

But later, in bed, the lights out, her thoughts already beginning to drift toward the memory of David Reynolds, she felt herself stiffen when he nuzzled the back of her neck. His hand slid around to cup her breast through the nightgown.

"Honey?" he murmured. "I love you."

"Hmmmn."

"Is that any way to greet your lover?"

She heard the attempt at humor in his voice, his old impulse to tease where she had always wanted open and intimate communication. "I'm sorry, Michael. I'm very tired."

He began planting kisses along the nape of her neck, and she was surprised at the strength of her resistance, her own inability to respond. I'm sorry, she thought, please forgive me, I didn't choose this. "Please, Michael. Not tonight."

"No?"

"No. I'm sorry."

She felt his hand withdraw and slide down to rest, hesitantly, at her waist. She reached down and, sadly, feeling sorry for him, for what he did not know and she could not tell him, brought his hand to her mouth and kissed it. "I love you, Michael," she said, like a duty, to protect him, to shield him from the truth.

"I love you, too," he said, and pulled away, rolling over to face the wall and go to sleep.

She lay awake for a long time. Even though she was very tired, she couldn't seem to sleep. Her mind was alive and restless, thinking of the look in David Reynolds' eyes, of the story Mrs. Bates had told her, of what confronted her in the morning. She knew now what the purpose of all this was. She was faced with the task of solving a crime committed half a century before she was born —and, moreover, of solving it before it happened.

12

WHEN SHE WOKE the next morning, the pale dawn was just seeping into the room. For an instant she was poised between sleep and waking, some half-forgotten expectation nibbling at her memory, and then, like a bubble rising to the surface of her mind, she remembered and it came flooding back, the events of the day before. She stirred, turned, and looked at Michael asleep in bed beside her. His innocence, in sleep, stirred that curiously protective urge within her again. Softly, remorsefully, she leaned down to kiss his cheek. He murmured something unintelligible and turned over, winding the blankets around him. She got out of bed and tiptoed to the window. Dew still glistened on the grass outside. She was impatient for day to begin.

She made herself wait until ten o'clock, to make sure nothing unexpected brought Michael back from the city. When she was sure it was safe, she changed into the dress and walked down the road to the bottom of the hill. If David Reynolds saw her coming from there, she would say she had walked along the lake from town. The day was cool and gray, with a stiff wind blowing waves diagonally across the lake. The transition into the past made her apprehensive—she was still uncertain of her control—but when she closed her eyes and concentrated she felt the impulse rise naturally within her and followed it, allowed it to take her, through the dizziness, nausea and pain, to the other side. When she opened her eyes she had emerged into a clear and sunny morning, where the lake lay still and calm beneath a blue and cloudless sky. Holding her skirts out of the dust, she started up the hill toward the house.

No one answered her knock on the door. She went around to the rear of the house. The buggy David Reynolds had been working on the day before was

partially visible beyond the carriage house and, tethered to it, tail switching against the summer flies, was a saddled horse. Voices came from near the buggy. She crept across the dusty drive to the near wall of the carriage house and peered around the corner, through a protective screen of ivy climbing a lattice-work trellis. David Reynolds, dark vest hanging open over a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, was kneeling beside the buggy, prying the hubcap from the right front wheel. On a box behind him sat a young man in what seemed an army uniform—long belted jacket with a pistol holstered at one side, a sword at the other, a wide-brimmed hat, and knee-high boots with spurs. As she watched, he struck a match against the heel of his boot and cupped it around a thin black cigar. When the cigar was lit, he flicked the match away.

"I have half a mind to bring a squad of cavalry down here and raid that place," he said. "I'd get her out of there."

David Reynolds hammered at the pry bar, popping loose the hubcap, which rolled in diminishing circles and waggled to a stop in the grass. "What did Hubbard say?"

"I went to his office," the young man said. "Had the very devil of a time getting in. That young clerk he's got, Wiggins—snide little fellow if I've ever seen one—tried to tell me Hubbard wasn't in, but I knew better. I'd been waiting across the street when he opened the office this morning, so I knew he was there. But I had to threaten violence to get past that Wiggins. The old man saw me then all right. He had no alternative."

Jennie found herself trembling. Sunlight filtered in a filmy blur of green through the ivy; a june bug traversed the endless plain of a leaf an inch away from her eyes, took wing to light in her hair. She brushed it away, scarcely able to believe she was really here again. The young man's uniform was vaguely familiar from pictures in history books. David Reynolds, with his full sideburns and moustache, his open vest and boots, was unmistakably a figure from another time. Watching them—two nineteenth-century men beside a buggy in the morning sun, with a saddled horse waiting patiently nearby—was like peering not through a leafy trellis but through a window into history.

David unflared the cotter pin in the hub-nut and began tapping it through with a wrench. "I don't suppose Hubbard found it in him to be friendly."

"Friendly? The man was barely civil. But I expected that. He's never hidden his dislike for me since I started courting Rachel."

"When had you seen him last? I suppose it must have been—"

"Yes, poor Pamela's funeral. Even under those circumstances he was rude. Went out of his way to keep Rachel away from me, and she in grief as she was."

"I suspect he wants very much to hold her to him—his oldest daughter now Pamela is gone."

His oldest daughter now Pamela was gone. Jennie was suddenly alert, thinking. Hubbard had to be David Reynolds' father-in-law. It was frightening, hearing him mention so casually the man who, in a few days or weeks, was quite possibly going to kill him. A man she had first heard of three-quarters of a century from now.

"He absolutely forbade me to come near the house," the young man said. "I'm not to write to Rachel nor contact her in any way. He actually threatened to have me arrested if I tried to see her again. I don't like it. The man seems almost mad."

"I believe he very nearly is," David said. "At least where his daughters are concerned."

"I'm glad now he wasn't home when I tried to see Rachel yesterday. That housekeeper he's hired, Mrs. Trapp, came near setting the dogs on me as it was. But the old man might have taken a pistol to me. He implied as much this morning." The young man shaved the ash from his cigar against his boot-heel. "The thing is, what am I to do now? I can't see her, we can't correspond. She's held a virtual prisoner in the house."

David removed the hub-nut and placed it with the cotter pin in the hubcap. "Charles, you know I feel a certain responsibility toward Rachel. And I think nothing better could happen than for her to become your wife." Wiping his hands on a rag, he turned to the other man. "How would you feel about spiriting her away?"

"Eloping? But how, when I can't even get close to her?"

"Then you would do it?"

"I'd do anything to get her away from that man. It's unnatural for a father to act as he does. But how?"

"I haven't been to the Hubbard place since . . . since Pamela's funeral. I haven't yet met this Mrs. Trapp. There's a chance I could get in and talk to Rachel. Arrange some way to do it."

"If it's to be done, it has to be soon. I have to be back at the Point in a week."

Jennie felt something touch the hem of her dress—a dog, sniffing at her feet, looking up at her with mournful eyes. It was the same dog she had seen in the grape arbor that day at the upstairs window. Quickly, to keep it from barking, she crouched and took its head between her hands. She dodged an affectionate swipe of its tongue and was relieved to see its tail begin to wag.

"I'll try to see her tomorrow," David was saying. "I'll let you know what happens as soon as I can. In the meantime, try to keep out of sight. We'll want Hubbard to believe you've given up and gone back to the Point."

Jennie buried her faced in the dog's neck. If the town's suspicions about Pamela's father were correct—and everything she had heard seemed to confirm that they were—she might be overhearing the start of the very thing that led him to kill David. Surely this was no accident; surely she was being brought to this time in order to save his life. From the direction of the buggy came the nicker of the horse, the jingle of the young man's spurs. He was preparing to leave. She couldn't allow them to discover her eavesdropping. She stood up and straightened her dress. Then, the dog at her heels, she went around the corner toward the buggy.

The two men were standing beside the horse, talking; the other man, facing her, noticed her first, and then David turned, saw her, and smiled.

"Good morning," he said. "So you did come back."

"I wanted to apologize for my . . . hasty departure yesterday."

"I'll admit you gave me something of a scare. I hope you're well."

"Yes, thank you."

He introduced the army officer as Lt. Charles Stickney. "Miss Logan is the young lady I told you about, who came to visit yesterday."

Lieutenant Stickney removed his hat. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Logan. I was very glad to hear you had explained the mystery of David's visions. We were all beginning to worry."

David grinned. “It’s a relief not to have my friends worrying about me anymore.”

“Your first season in Chesapequa?” the lieutenant asked.

“Yes.”

“A pleasant place. The large hotels can be very nice. I’m afraid army pay relegates me to the Copper Inn, but I always enjoy Chesapequa. I’m sorry to be leaving just as we meet, but I’m afraid I have to get back in town.” He had untied the reins from the rear of the buggy; now he swung up into the saddle. “David, I’ll wait for your word.” He touched a finger to his hatbrim. “I hope to see you again, Miss Logan.”

When he had disappeared through the gate, Jennie turned to find David smiling at her. Up close, she saw fine lines of gray in the deep blue of his eyes, radiating outward from the pupil like spokes from a wheel. She felt that strange, sweet tremor of excitement in her stomach again; it was a warm, lovely feeling, but disconcerting, and it made her shy.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again,” he said.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt your work. I’d be happy to watch if you’d like to finish.”

The old wheel still hung from the axle hub; a new one, meant to replace it, lay in the grass.

“I would like to get this buggy back on its wheels. You’re welcome to watch, if you’re sure you don’t mind. It would certainly make the work more enjoyable for me.”

She seated herself on the box vacated by Lieutenant Stickney, and the dog ambled over to lay his head in her lap.

David smiled. “It seems you’ve made a friend.”

“He’s very sweet. What’s his name?”

He crouched before the wheel again, lifting it off and laying it in the grass beside the new one. “Old Napoleon I call him. He’s very old—you can see the gray around his muzzle.” He dipped a finger into a tin of grease and began daubing it around the axle hub. “I assume the lieutenant was right—you’re staying at one of the large hotels?”

“Yes,”—remembering what Mrs. Bates had said—“the Henry Hudson.”

“How did you come to be up here, that day I saw you on the road?”

"I was out walking, and I wanted to see the lake from here. It's a lovely view."

"Yes, that's why I like living here. It reminds me of Europe."

"Have you lived here long?"

"I rented this place, and agreed to farm it, when Pamela and I decided to marry. That was . . . not too long ago, after I came back from Europe."

She hesitated, then decided to risk it. "I couldn't help overhearing your conversation with Lieutenant Stickney. Rachel is Pamela's sister?"

He glanced at her from where he was lifting the new wheel onto the axle hub. "Her younger sister, yes. Lieutenant Stickney's fiancee. I suppose you overheard the difficulty they're having."

"I heard something about elopement."

He grinned: "I hope you can keep a secret. But, yes, that's the plan. You see, old man Hubbard, Pamela's father, Rachel's father, is a strange man. Probably always was, but—well, I don't know if you want to hear all this."

"Oh, it's very interesting. Please go on."

"Well, you see, Matthew Hubbard lost his wife, the girls' mother, when Pamela was about thirteen. Of a fever, I believe. And that's made him very possessive of his daughters. He has no sons—only Rachel now, and a third daughter just turned sixteen. But Pamela was always his favorite. She was the oldest, and she took charge then, being a mother to her sisters, taking care of the household. And I think Hubbard convinced himself she'd never marry, that she'd stay with him till he died."

"He must dislike you very much then."

"I'm afraid he does. He only relented when Pamela made it clear she would marry with or without his consent. I doubt that would have any effect now, in Rachel's case. She's not as strong as Pamela, and in any event Hubbard seems determined now that she shouldn't marry. She's no longer even allowed out of the house except in the company of the family. Not even allowed to receive Charles' letters. Which is why he's here—he was getting them back unopened."

"And you hope to convince her to elope."

He smiled. "I doubt much convincing will be necessary. Not if I know Rachel and the way she feels about Charles. The difficulty will be in getting to see her. And arranging a way."

"What if her father learns you were involved? Won't that be dangerous?"

"He could be unpleasant, I suppose. But he is already that."

"Is he—a violent man?"

He picked up the hub-nut and eased it carefully onto the axle hub. "It's hard to say. He came here from Virginia, and Southerners are noted for their tempers. But I doubt he'd actually resort to violence."

He began turning the nut with a wrench, hand over hand so that the rhythm of the turning never ceased, and Jennie looked away, out across the road and toward the lake below, which she could not see from here. Bees hummed somewhere beyond the hedge, and a butterfly fluttered across a stand of weeds, settled briefly on a leaf, wings pulsing, then fluttered away again. From somewhere near the barn came the cackling of chickens in some sudden conflict in the chicken yard. She was afraid to continue asking questions, but there was so much more she wanted to know. Somehow it had to be possible for her to intervene in this process so that the fate he did not even know awaited him could be averted. That was why she was here, she was sure of that now; she had been sent back here to save this man with whom there was no longer any doubt that she was in love. Even if he never learned she loved him, even if after she had succeeded in preventing his death the mysterious force which had brought her here sent her irrevocably back into her own time, so that she never saw him again, she could live happy then, knowing she had fulfilled her purpose.

He finished tapping the hubcap back on and with a sledge hammer which had been leaning against the running board knocked the blocks out from under the axle. The buggy dropped lightly to the ground, rocking a bit on its springs. "Done," he said, wiping his hands on the rag. "May I offer you lunch? You've been very patient."

"I like watching you work," she said, getting up from the box. "I've never seen a buggy wheel changed before."

"I do everything. Feed the pigs, the chickens—but it gives me a place to live while I do my own work." He grinned. "At least that's what I thought when I took the place on. I'm beginning to wonder."

She smiled. They were walking toward the house. "You'll have to let me help you feed the pigs. That would be an experience."

"Certainly it would be an experience for me. I'd be delighted."

They were climbing the steps to the long front porch when she heard the snorting of a horse and the clip-clop of hooves and looked back to see a buggy turn into the drive and come toward them, emerging like an apparition through the gate, a reminder that she was really here, in 1899. It excited her. The driver was a blond man in his middle twenties, wearing a straw boater. As the buggy pulled up before the house, she saw the eyes of his companion—a darkly beautiful young woman in a white dress similar to her own—gazing coolly and inquisitively at her from the shade of a ruffled parasol.

"David," the woman called as she came up the walk, "Edward and I decided you've been alone quite long enough, so we've come to call." She kissed him on the cheek, glancing quickly at Jennie. "I hope we're not intruding."

"No one's ever known you to intrude, Elizabeth," David said, with a touch of irony, and made the introductions. The woman was Elizabeth Hartley, the man her brother Edward. "Miss Logan is staying at the Henry Hudson."

"How nice." The woman eyed her critically. "I do hope you're enjoying it." Then she looped her arm through David's and led him to the round wicker table in the corner of the porch, where her brother had deposited a large picnic basket. "We've brought lunch. I hope you don't mind. It's quite good, we got it at Bradley's—you must go there, Miss Logan, the best market in town—sliced ham and cold chicken and some fine Gruyere. Buns from Langstraat's. And two bottles of wine. Cold. I'm sure there's enough for four."

When the basket was emptied, the table seemed to glow with the green of the wine bottles, the pale yellow of the cheese, the icy clarity of the glasses. Watching Edward, in his candy-striped blazer and white trousers, dip a slice of chicken into mayonnaise, hearing Elizabeth chattering flirtatiously to David, Jennie was deliciously aware that she was participating in a scene out of dozens of photographs and paintings from the eighteen-nineties. It was marred only by her covert jealousy, but she had the comforting feeling that David had placed himself at her side deliberately, allying himself with her. Elizabeth sat across the table from her, Edward on her other side.

"Are you staying at one of the hotels, too?" she asked.

"Oh, no," Edward said. He had a nice smile beneath his blond moustache. "The Hartleys are native Chesapequans, I'm afraid."

"It was Edward and Elizabeth who introduced me to Chesapequa," David said.

"We pretend not to like the summer trade," Edward said, "but actually we thrive on it. Without it the town would be very dull. I'm sure you enjoy getting away from New York, but I do miss it."

"Edward once wanted to be a painter, too," Elizabeth said, playing with a Japanese fan. "But when Daddy died, he decided it was more lucrative to take over the family business, didn't you, Edward?"

"Luckily, I found out early I hadn't enough talent."

Elizabeth eyed him with affectionate malice. "Soon he'll be a respectable burgher married to a fat wife, with a dozen children."

"Hardly. I have no plans to marry till I'm thirty. Maybe a child at thirty-five."

"But look at the opportunities you may miss with that attitude. All the attractive young ladies will be gone by then. Don't you find my brother a handsome man, Miss Logan?"

"Elizabeth, please." Surprisingly, Edward Hartley was blushing.

Jennie had felt an instant dislike for this woman; after an hour's conversation it had grown to a genuine aversion. Elizabeth made little effort to conceal her advances toward David and seemed confident they would be well received. She was certainly beautiful, a lush and almost Latin beauty, with streaks of red in her dark brown hair, and large dark eyes which she knew how to use to good effect. Though women probably matured earlier in this era, she seemed in her early twenties. Her mouth was broad and sensual, and the sweep of her lacy dress did little to hide the voluptuous curves of her figure. David seemed to like her, to be amused by her, and by the time the food was gone and the sun had begun to strike the western edge of the porch, Jennie was more than a little jealous.

Elizabeth was playing the coquette with David, trying to convince him to let her puff on his pipe.

"Elizabeth," her brother said, "don't make a spectacle of yourself."

"Hmmpf, why should men have all the fun? I think it's so attractive for a man to smoke a pipe. Perhaps I should take up cigarettes. Some women do, you know."

"We know what kind of women, Elizabeth."

"You're quite attractive enough without a cigarette," David drawled.

"Am I really? I remember when you used to think so. I used to be David's favorite model, Miss Logan, can you believe that? Oh, nothing risqué, of course, though I admit the notion intrigued me. But David was always too proper."

"Elizabeth. You must forgive my sister, Miss Logan. She loves to shock, but she's really quite respectable."

Elizabeth hit him with her fan. "How boring. You don't know how I envy the freedom some women have. The women in those figure classes you and David used to attend, for instance. I met one of them once, you know. Fully clothed, of course, after the class. She wasn't nearly so attractive as I am."

"Her attractiveness, or lack of it, was not the point, my dear."

"Oh, but wouldn't it be so much more interesting if she were terribly attractive?"

David smiled. "I think you're just intrigued by the idea of distracting the students."

"You'll drive us all to distraction," Edward said, "and I don't mean through your beauty, evident though it is. Can't we get this conversation onto more suitable ground? I'm afraid we're making a bad impression on Miss Logan."

Elizabeth smiled smugly over her fan. "I think Miss Logan is mature enough to understand."

"Now you're being rude. I think we should go." Edward stood up. "Really, ever since Father died, Elizabeth has been unmanageable," he said to David. "She wants everyone to believe she's going to kick over the traces at any moment."

"And I might, I just might," Elizabeth said. "You must let us drive you back to your hotel, Miss Logan. It will save poor David going into town, and we all know what a recluse he's become."

"No, thank you. I enjoy the walk."

"You're sure?" Edward said, picking up his hat, the basket over his arm. "It can be a very pleasant drive. Well, perhaps we'll see each other again."

Jennie remained on the porch as the others strolled out to the buggy, Elizabeth with her arm through David's, laughing, whispering something in his

ear. David helped her up into the buggy, and she leaned down and placed a hand around the back of his neck and kissed him. Jennie felt the worm of jealousy stir within her again, and then, slowly, the growth of an ominous suspicion: the other woman, who was seen leaving the scene of the crime, who was suspected of killing him—was that Elizabeth? She was obviously in pursuit of him. Had she, Jennie, witnessed the birth, or rebirth, of a relationship which was to lead to his death? And wasn't that why she felt that love inside her, felt even from David that strong attraction? They were meant to fall in love, so that she could prevent his taking up with "the other woman" of Mrs. Bates' story. She felt again that sense of confirmation: she was here for a purpose, she had been placed at this meeting for a purpose. Whoever had killed him, Hubbard or Elizabeth, she was meant to prevent it. That had to be why she was here, the one person who knew what was destined to happen.

Edward Hartley flicked the reins, and the buggy started toward the gate. Jennie turned back to the table. It had the look of an artist's still life: sunlight through half-empty wine glasses, pale slices of cheese on the dark brown plate, the scrap of a bun lying among a litter of paper wrappings. She began cleaning up, wrapping the bun in the paper.

David came up the steps behind her. "You don't have to do that," he said.

She turned to see him poised against the porch pillar, smiling at her. The sudden absence of the other two seemed to create a new and special intimacy between them.

"We didn't finish the wine, in any case," he said.

"Would you like more?"

"As a matter of fact, I would. If you'll have another glass with me."

He pulled up his chair again and relit his pipe. She poured the wine, first into his glass, then into her own. It seemed a very intimate act. She was aware now of the comfortable quiet of the yard, a faint breeze rustling the leaves of the trees, the drone of a bee approaching and receding through the warm summer sunlight.

"I'm glad you stayed," he said.

She smiled. "You promised to let me help you feed the pigs."

"Did I? Another day perhaps. If you'll come again? The greedy brutes were already fed today. You may help me feed the chickens, though."

"I'd like that."

"You'll have to forgive me my friends. Edward is really a pleasant man, but Elizabeth can sometimes be a trial."

"I thought she was . . . amusing."

He chuckled. "She is that. She's changed a lot. When I first met them, she wasn't nearly so, well, outspoken."

"You knew them before you came to Chesapequa, you said."

"Yes, Edward and I met in New York. I first came to Chesapequa to visit the Hartleys."

"And then you met Pamela?"

"Yes, that came later."

From behind the barn came a sudden squabble of chickens.

David smiled. "I believe they're impatient. Shall we?"

He led her across the yard to a small dim room in the corner of the barn. Light came through cracks in the walls; corn was ricked high in a crib along one side. He took a bucket from a nail on the wall and began shelling corn into it, wrenching the ears between his hands, the dried kernels pattering against the tin.

"The city fathers will have to add a new attraction for summer visitors," he said, "feeding chickens. This can't have been the way you planned to spend your time in Chesapequa."

"No, but it's much more pleasant. I'm alone so much of the time. Today has been the nicest day I've spent since I came here." She was a little surprised to hear herself say that, to realize it was true.

"I must say it has been the nicest day I've spent in some time, too." He smiled up at her. "For which you bear no small responsibility."

When he had finished shelling the corn he added a scoop of gleaming grain from one of the barrels against the wall and then led her out through a gate in the fence to the chicken yard. Chickens scratched and pecked in the bare dirt. He set the bucket down on a stump between them and flung a handful of corn and grain in a wide arc toward the chickens. Squawking, they came in a comic, awkward run, and she couldn't help laughing. She saw from the corner of her eye that he was smiling at her, and she felt herself blush, knowing he was pleased.

"You do it," he said.

Hesitantly, she dipped her hand into the cool, dry grain and threw a fistful toward the chickens, watching them scatter to the spot where it fell. Involuntarily, she looked to him for approval; his eyes met hers, and she felt the fullness of her mouth begin to quiver. She looked away, excitement and pleasure pulsing in her throat. He threw out another handful of corn; she laughed and clapped her hands as one large red rooster rose up in a flurry of feathers to scatter a flock of hens.

"Watch that red one," David said. "He's king of the flock."

She nodded, happy, watching the rooster. She felt very elemental, throwing corn and grain to a flock of chickens in the shadow of a barn on a clear sunny afternoon in 1899. When she reached into the bucket for another handful, she felt her hand collide with his. Flushed, she fumbled in the corn, felt their hands touch, move apart, touch again. "Oh, look," she said, as the rooster scattered another cluster of hens to get at the corn, but she was aware of nothing so strongly as the hot flush creeping up over her face and the fumbling touch of their hands in the bucket. For one long moment, she felt his hand rest against hers; then it was gone, and he brought up another handful of grain to throw at the chickens.

She swallowed, to gain control of her voice. "Is there only one rooster?"

"Yes," he said, "there's only one rooster."

She was afraid to look at him; she kept watching the rooster, excitement thickening her throat.

"Here," he said, "try again."

Only when she had dipped her hand into the bucket and scattered another handful of corn toward the chickens did she find the courage to look at him. His gaze was steady and direct.

"You are a very beautiful woman," he said. "I would like you to pose for me. Just a sketch at first, if you would."

She hesitated. The sun was casting long shadows; it was getting late. She had compared the time on his kitchen clock with the time on her own when she had come back into her own century the day before. The times were the same. She would have to get back before Michael came home, so he wouldn't see her in the dress. She didn't want to arouse his suspicions.

"I'm afraid I can't today. I have to leave very soon."

"Will you come again? Tomorrow?" He smiled. "We do have to feed those pigs, you know."

"What day is tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, I believe, is Saturday."

Saturday. The days too were the same. Michael would be home tomorrow. And the next day.

"I could come again Monday." Monday morning was her appointment with Dr. Salzman. "Monday afternoon?"

"If that's the best I can hope for, I suppose I can wait." The corn and grain was almost gone from the bucket. He stood up, flinging a last handful toward the chickens. "The buggy's fixed—may I drive you back to your hotel?"

"Thank you very much, but I really did mean what I said to the Hartleys. I would enjoy the walk."

He held the gate of the chicken yard open for her; the feel of his hand on the small of her back as she passed sent a small thrill through her.

"I'll look forward to seeing you again," he said. "If you'll let me hang up this bucket, I'll walk you to the road."

"Oh, no, I can find my way."

"As you wish. Till Monday then."

She turned and went across the yard, past the grape arbor and the tree where she had seen him from the upstairs window. At the corner of the house, she stopped and looked back. He was still standing in front of the barn, watching her. She turned and went down the steps and along the hard-packed dirt road till she was sure he couldn't see her.

It was only then, when she stopped, that she realized she didn't know how to get back into her own time. Always before, it had been involuntary, triggered by panic. What if it was possible only under special, extreme circumstances? She closed her eyes and concentrated, holding herself very tense. Immediately, she felt it: the ache crawling from her right shoulder up the muscle to the back of her neck, into her temple. Then the dizziness came and with it the sudden nausea and the rapid tripping of her heart. Then it was gone as suddenly as it had come, and she opened her eyes.

Ahead of her, the asphalt highway curved to plunge down the hill. Summer House Road angled away from the apex of the curve. From above her head came the humming of the transformer box she had heard the day before. And again she felt that surge of elation within her. *I can control it*, she thought, *I can control it*, turning to look back at the steps she had, three-quarters of a century ago, just descended.

13

ON SATURDAY she was very restless. As soon as breakfast was over, she retreated to the second-floor bedroom, deliberately avoiding Michael—presenting a normal front was too difficult. She heard him go into the bathroom downstairs, the sound of water being turned on at the sink. The habits of marriage—she could follow his actions without even seeing them: reaching for the toothbrush, squeezing paste from the tube, taking that one quick glance at himself in the mirror before bending to apply the brush to his teeth. She wished he would leave. If he were gone, she would be able to go back.

She opened the closet door and looked at the dress hanging white and beautiful inside, her passport back into 1899. Today was the day David had said he would try to contact Rachel. Would that fatal chain of events be set in motion today, while she was not there to prevent it? Perhaps Hubbard would overhear him talking to Rachel, discover what he was planning to do. Perhaps Elizabeth would return, fan to flame that relationship she so obviously wanted, which could lead her, for whatever as-yet-unknown reasons, to eventually kill him. She had to stop thinking like this. She closed the closet, returned down the stairs, went outside.

It was a calm and sunny day. The lake glittered bright and blue beneath a cloudless sky. This was what she had left the city for, but it meant nothing to her now. She walked along in front of the house, stopping just beyond the brick steps at the front door. Here, where she was standing, was the porch in his time, where they had sat together only yesterday, drinking wine. There, where the driveway circled the big round flower bed, had stood the Hartleys' buggy, where she had seen Elizabeth bend down to give him that suggestive

and very unsisterly kiss. Beyond the driveway would be the carriage house and his own buggy and the box she had sat on while he told her of that long chain which linked Stickney to Rachel to Pamela and to himself, and which might at this very moment be drawing him toward his inevitable death.

Slowly, she went along the yard toward the patio at the other end of the house. Beyond that corner of the patio would be the barn, the corncrib, the chicken run. She remembered the feel of his hand against hers, the intensity of his eyes. You are a very beautiful woman. Was he here, right now, somewhere in this yard? He might be there, going through the gate to the chicken run, another bucket of corn and grain in his hand; or there, where the carriage house would be, hitching the horse to the buggy. He might be standing here looking about the yard, trying to conjure her image before him, unaware that she was only speaking distance away, beyond that barrier of time.

Restlessness stirred within her again. She went back into the house and climbed the stairs to the attic room. This was his studio; he had built it. He might be here even now, preparing to leave for the Hubbard place, setting in motion the events that would lead to his being murdered. On the small table beside the daybed was the extension phone she had had installed. Softly she closed the door and got out the telephone book.

Mrs. Bates seemed pleased to hear from her. "You'll have to drop by the Society again, dear, and we'll chat."

"That's why I'm calling, Mrs. Bates." She cupped the receiver, keeping her voice low. "You remember I told you I have a friend who's a magazine editor? I mentioned to her what you told me—about the man who lived here? David Reynolds? She said there might be an interesting article there, if I could find out more about the story."

"Oh, isn't that exciting? Why, that would put Chesapequa on the map again."

"So I wondered if there was more to the story you hadn't told me. Any hints about what led to his death, or who did it."

"Oh, I'm afraid not, dear. I told you everything I know. As I said, it's been an unsolved crime to this very day."

"You remember you told me about his wife's sister eloping?"

"Well, yes, I seem to—"

"Did that play any part?"

"Oh, yes, you see, some thought he was involved in that and his father-in-law found it out. And as I say, some thought it was the woman he took up with. But nothing was ever proved."

"What was the woman's name, do you know?"

"No, no, it was a very clandestine thing, I believe."

"You said you learned the story from your aunt. I know you said she's, well, very old and her mind wanders and everything, but I wonder if she would know more. Do you see her often?"

"Oh, Aunt Betty lives with me. I took her in when Mr. Bates died. But I really think I know as much about the story as she does. I've heard it so many times."

"Do you think I could come talk to her about it?"

"Oh, I don't think so, dear. She's really quite senile now. I doubt it would do you any good. And she's really not at all well. I have a private nurse for her, and I'm afraid Nurse Jenkins strongly disapproves of her being disturbed by visitors."

"I see. Well, thanks anyway. I'm sorry to have bothered you."

"Why, it's no bother—I do love talking to someone interested in the past. I'm sorry I can't be of more help. Does this mean there won't be an article?"

"I—I'm not sure. I'll keep in touch about it."

"Please do. Maybe we can find some other story your editor friend would like."

Jennie replaced the receiver and lay back on the bed. One cottony cloud drifted in the expanse of sky visible through the skylight. David put that skylight there. The thought brought her up and off the daybed, across the room to the skylight. Wistfully, she touched the cool sloping glass. Outside, she saw a breeze ripple through her flower garden, sunlight flashing from a car on Summer House Road. This wasn't what she wanted to see. She wanted to see the grape arbor, the barn; she wanted to be there again. Then she thought: I know. I know something that has felt his touch as recently as a month ago. Here, in this house, in this time. A part of him she could have, to keep with the sketches he had made, to look at and hold when she was not with him.

Eagerly now, she left the room and went down the stairs.

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When Michael heard her on the stairs, he got up from his chair and crept quietly to the living-room entranceway. At the sound of the back door's closing, he started through the dining room after her. He had seen her earlier wandering the yard and, worried, had moved stealthily from window to window, watching. She had walked as if in a trance, pausing for long minutes to stare out across the yard as if watching something he could not see. Watching her, he wondered if this was what she looked like while having an hallucination. But except for her strange, aimless wandering and the vacant stare, she seemed normal. Now he reached the kitchen door just in time to see her disappearing behind the garage.

Outside, he sprinted cautiously across the grass to a tree, from behind which he could see the far side of the garage. Jennie was rummaging in the trash barrel, her back to him. In a matter of seconds, she had removed everything she could reach and tipped the barrel over on its side to get at the stuff in the bottom. Kneeling, she lifted something from the bottom of the barrel and held it in her lap—too small for him to make out. Then, as he watched, astonished, she pressed it lovingly to her lips. Abruptly, she placed it on the grass and began shoveling the debris back into the barrel. When it was full and returned to its upright stance again, she picked up whatever it was she had placed on the ground and started back toward the house. Keeping a careful distance behind her, he followed her inside. When her footsteps had died away in the attic, he started up the stairs.

He paused in the doorway to the skylighted studio. She was bending over the worktable, her back to him, wrapping something in a soft cloth.

"Jennie?"

He saw her start; she turned, her body shielding the cloth-wrapped package on the table.

"I just thought I'd come up and see how you were." Casually, he crossed to the table, reached for the package. "What are you doing?"

Her hand flew out and pinned the cloth to the table. For an instant they stood that way, hand to hand. Then she seemed to realize how futile it was and drew her hand away. Feeling foolishly like a detective discovering evidence, he

unwrapped the cloth. Inside, among smaller fragments, lay two large shards of glass.

"It's the glass from the old kitchen cupboard," she said. "I thought I'd save it, it's so old." She fumbled for a piece, held it up. "See, it's all streaked with age. I thought maybe I'd make a mosaic out of it."

"Tell me the truth, Jennie."

"It is the truth. It's the glass from the cupboard."

"I believe it's the glass from the cupboard. Tell me why you took it out of the trash barrel."

"I told you why, Michael," she said, but her voice lacked conviction.

"It has something to do with your hallucinations, doesn't it? The cupboard was in the house when that painter lived here, the man that woman told you about. It has something to do with that, doesn't it?"

She didn't answer.

"I saw you at the trash barrel, Jennie. You kissed this glass, Jennie. That's a very strange thing to do. Do you want me to believe you're not in your right mind?"

Her eyes flashed. "That's what you want to believe, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't. But I think you've had another hallucination, something to do with this glass, and you're convinced it's real. Tell me the truth."

"All right, so I did go back."

"You mean you had another hallucination. You have to tell me, Jennie, so I can help you."

"Help me? You're trying to convince me I'm insane. I'm not."

He sighed, and went over to sit on the daybed. "All right, it wasn't a hallucination. What was it?"

"I went back."

"Okay, you went back. And what happened?"

"I talked to him."

"You talked to him."

"Stop trying to humor me. It really happened, I tell you."

She slumped into the chair behind the worktable, turning her face away. He was struck by how beautifully her back curved down to her waist, how her twisted posture accentuated the curve of one graceful calf. It had always been a

pleasant thing, his abrupt awareness, at odd and irrelevant moments like this, of how beautiful she was, but now it only increased his anxiety. This is real, he thought, this is dangerous, this is how it feels when somebody you love begins to go insane. He remembered her pawing through the trash barrel, lifting the glass dreamily to her lips, and tried not to think of the eerie, gesticulating madness of asylum inmates.

He tried to keep his voice gentle. "Tell me what happened, Jennie."

"Nothing. You wouldn't believe me. But everything's true. He's the man Mrs. Bates told me about. They're *not* hallucinations. They're too long, too detailed."

"Of course, honey. Of course they're longer and more detailed. Now you've got a ready-made situation, real people—you're creating it out of what that woman told you."

"Then how do you explain the fact that he saw me that day on the road? He saw me that day at the lake. He smashed the cupboard the same night we heard it."

"Jennie, don't you see? It's all taking place in your mind. He's a figment of your imagination—you can make him do whatever will fit the story you've been told." That struck home; he saw her hesitate as the possibility sank in. "What did you talk to him about, Jennie?"

She didn't answer.

"You think he's real, and you think you're in love with him. Don't you, Jennie? You're inventing a love affair to get back at me, because of what I did. And because you think I'm not romantic enough."

"You're like everybody else. They're all afraid to feel strong emotion, to really love anybody."

"Love is just chemistry, Jennie, just nature's way of propagating the race. That passionate intensity you're so hungry for is an illusion, an aberration."

"Everything I do is an aberration, isn't it?"

"I didn't say that." He was aware that he was breaking one of Salzman's cardinal rules, not to talk about her sickness with her, but there was no alternative. "Jennie, I think we ought to go away for a while. I'll take a vacation. We can go to the Caribbean or someplace, give you a complete change of scene."

"I don't want to go anywhere with you. Maybe you're right that I need a change of scene, but I couldn't have that if we went away together."

"You're angry at me now—all right, I understand that. But I don't think you should take a vacation by yourself. Not while you're still seeing Dr. Salzman."

"I don't want a vacation. You're the one who said I need a change of scene. I'd just like to go away for a couple of days. To think."

He had to get her away from this house. The fact that that painter had lived here, that his wife's name was Pamela—all that lent credibility to her hallucinations. Her delusions seemed to feed off the house and everything surrounding it. "Why don't you go to Fire Island then? You know Beverly said you could use the house any time you wanted it. And you wouldn't be alone there, you have friends there."

"You wouldn't mind if I went to Fire Island by myself?"

"I think it would be good for you. As long as you're not alone. You did say Janice Gales had the house right across the walk."

She came over to sit beside him and shyly took his hand. "Forgive me, Michael. You don't know how difficult this is for me. I'm sorry I got angry. I'm really sorry about everything."

But later, after they had gone downstairs together, he realized she had retracted nothing. She still believed what was happening to her was real.

14

SHE HAD ALREADY PLANNED how to do it. On Sunday, while Michael was away on a golf date with some men he had met on the train, she called the real estate broker who had sold them the house; she knew he was open because Sunday was his day for showing houses to people up from the city. He did know of a summer house for rent—an old farmhouse really, right down the road from her. The owner, the widowed Mrs. Miller, lived in town now, with a sister, and rented it out when she could.

At two o'clock that afternoon, she picked up Mrs. Miller in town and drove out to look at the house. It sat just across Summer House Road from the lake, but a path led through the trees down to the water's edge. It was precisely what she needed: a place from which to go back and forth to 1899, during the time Michael believed she was at Fire Island. She rented it on the spot, making a small deposit so there would be no record of a check transaction.

She had been avoiding all awareness of her session with Dr. Salzman, but the next morning's train ride into the city made thinking about it inescapable. She had settled into a seat beside the window when the conductor came into the car and began punching tickets along the aisle. She watched her own eyes watching her in the reflection from the window. She was going to lie if necessary. She had to confront that. Because she had no intention of telling Dr. Salzman what was happening to her; she no longer had any need to convince someone else that it was real. All her energy now was concentrated on one task: to find some way to save David Reynolds' life.

But when she was once again in that chair, in the dim light from the little lamp on his desk, her resolve almost faltered. He was such an earnest and sympathetic man; she hated to lie to him. She sensed him waiting patiently in

the silence, just beyond her vision on the left. Finally the silence made her anxiety stronger than her fear of lying.

"I've had another hallucination," she said.

"Hmmmn." Beyond that simple sound of encouragement, he seemed to react not at all.

"It was last week. I met the man I've seen those other times."

"Hmmmn."

She went on to describe her first meeting with David Reynolds, condensing it, not mentioning the rest, so that he would believe there had been only one occurrence. She made herself color the description so as to lend it the quality of a genuine hallucination. When she finished, she waited in anxious silence for several seconds before he spoke.

"It's been some time since you've had a relapse like this," he said. "Can you think of anything that might have caused these symptoms to recur? What comes to mind?"

And she realized she was safe. There was no danger that his curiosity might be aroused, that he might sense between the lines the larger story she was concealing. They spent the rest of the session discussing her relationship with Michael, searching for something that might have triggered her "recurrence of symptoms." It was important. Dr. Salzman said, because it might provide further evidence toward an understanding of her entire problem.

Later that morning, after leaving Dr. Salzman's office, she went up to Beverly's apartment on East 73rd Street for a drink. It was Beverly's day for working at home, and the table in the little dining alcove was littered with manuscripts and galleys. They had vodka martinis in the long, sparsely furnished living room—all plastic tables and severe, uncomfortable chairs—and Jennie listened to Beverly talk about her latest lover, a director of television commercials she had met after breaking up with Don. Through it all, Jennie nervously turned her glass around and around in her hands, trying to get up the courage to ask Beverly what she had come to ask her. It wasn't until it was time to go, when she had gathered up her purse and had it in her lap, that she was able to say it.

"Bev, I need you to do me a favor."

"Sure, Jen, what is it?"

Jennie discovered that her fingers were restlessly unclasping and refastening her purse. She made herself stop it. "I'd like to kind of borrow your house on Fire Island for a couple of days."

"Sure, kid. I told you—you have a standing invitation. When do you want to go out?"

It was an effort to continue. "I told Michael I was spending tomorrow and the next day out there. If he calls, would you . . . will you tell him that's where I am? Cover for me?" She could feel a faint blush rising up her cheeks.

"Uh oh, what's the kid up to?" Beverly was suddenly bright-eyed, exhaling a quick stream of cigarette smoke. "You didn't tell me."

"Please, Bev. I'm serious."

"Come on. Give. Where'd you meet him? Don't tell me you've met someone in that backwater you moved to." Beverly collapsed back in her chair, laughing. "That's just like you, Jennie. Only you could remain faithful in a city full of eligible men and then meet someone in some little country town. Don't tell me you've fallen head over heels for some earthy farmer?"

"Please, Bev. This is hard enough for me." She was beginning to realize she didn't really like Beverly very much. She wasn't sure whether the dislike was new or just her awareness of it, but it annoyed her.

"Okay, kid," Beverly said. "Sorry. I guess it is a little hard for you, huh? You're a beginner at this sort of thing, aren't you?"

"Will you just please do it for me, Bev?"

Beverly stubbed her cigarette out in the ashtray and stood up. "Okay, Jennie. Sure. Of course I will. You'd better tell me some place I can contact you, though, in case Michael comes out to the Island."

"I'm sorry. I can't do that."

Beverly shrugged. "If you say so. Anyway, you don't have to worry about his calling the Island to check up on you. There's no phone in the house. Very few of the houses out there have phones. One thing, though. One of these days I want to hear all about it. That's my price for the use of the house."

At the door, she gave Jennie a kiss on the cheek. "If you want to know the truth, I never liked Michael anyway."

Jennie punched the elevator button in the hallway and looked back. Beverly was leaning in the doorway, wearing a faintly amused smile.

“Thank you, Bev. I’m very grateful.”
“Just watch yourself, kid. Don’t get hurt.”

15

SUNLIGHT LAY ALONG the porch floor. Jennie sat in the porch swing, holding to the chain support with one hand, happy to be back in 1899 again. It was no more than three hours since she had left Beverly, but that world seemed as distant in fact now as it was in time. David sat a few feet away, in a wicker chair brought from the table at the other end of the porch, a sketchboard in his lap. From time to time he lifted his eyes to her, then returned his concentration to the sketch.

"I didn't even get to see her," he was saying. "The maid — Ames, I believe her name is — admitted me to the house, but I'm afraid I didn't get past Mrs. Trapp, the new housekeeper."

"Was Mr. Hubbard home?"

"No; if he had been, I doubt I'd even have got in the door. As it was, I did get in the house for twenty minutes or so. I was trying to charm Mrs. Trapp into letting me talk to Rachel." He looked up and smiled. "It seems Mrs. Trapp is impervious to charm."

"Do you think they suspect anything?"

"They know Charles is a friend of mine. It's natural they'd realize I was there on his behalf."

"But do you think they suspect an elopement?"

"Not specifically, I think. It's something Hubbard would guard against as a matter of course. Are you tiring?"

"Oh, no. I'm enjoying this."

She was glad he had posed her so she could see him. It was nice, feeling his eyes on her, being the object of his attention. The yard was filled with the constant somnolent murmur of bees lifting and hovering from flower to flower,

sluggish and heavy in the sunlight. A gull rode immobilized on a steady breeze above the lake, dipped in a downward arc beneath the brow of the hill, then rose up to assume once more its high motionless stance against the sky. How she wished to relax into all this beauty, but the restlessness from the weekend was still with her, the awareness that only she knew what was going to happen, that she had only a short time to learn enough to prevent it.

"What will you do now?"

"Ah," he said, "that's the interesting part. Tyrants are always hated by those beneath them. In this case, the subversive element is Ames, the maid. She's about Rachel's age, and Rachel has evidently won her confidence. When she saw me out, she pressed a note from Rachel into my hand."

"Then Rachel knew you were there?"

"I suspect Ames slipped upstairs to tell her while I was with Mrs. Trapp. Luckily. According to the note, Hubbard is taking the girls to visit family friends, the McIvers, next Tuesday evening. One of the McIver girls, Emily, is Rachel's closest friend. She'll help her steal away. Now all we have to do is get Charles there at the right time."

"Won't that be dangerous? If Mr. Hubbard's as unreasonable as you say he is?"

"I don't think so. He'll be occupied inside. It should be possible for the girls to slip off by themselves."

He leaned back in the chair, examining the sketch, then reached down to touch it up with the pencil. It was strange, watching him like this — vital, self-assured, not knowing, as she did, that he was soon to die. It was as if he didn't know she was there, as if she were a member of an invisible audience and he an actor on a stage, living out the role of another man's life, and she already knew the play, knew how it was going to end. Only the causes were obscure, the gaps in Mrs. Bates' story. How long had it been after Pamela's death before he took up with Elizabeth, before that relationship could have caused her to want to kill him? How long had it been before Stickney had succeeded in spiriting Rachel away, leaving David as the one remaining target of Hubbard's wrath? This way of thinking about him, in the past tense, unsettled her, as if he really were moving about beyond a window of time, already dead, a silent specimen

in a strange animated museum, and she was relieved when he spoke to break the spell: "I think that does it."

"Have you finished?"

"I've got what I wanted." He brought the sketchboard over to the swing and sat down beside her.

She saw at once the surety of hand, the accuracy of impression that indicated a man born with an artist's eye. Even in the quick strokes of the sketch she recognized herself — one hand in her lap, the other clutching the support-chain — looking directly at her. The chains dwindled into nothingness above her, a few bold lines indicated the slats of the swing, and she was impressed by the way he had conveyed through judicious areas of shading the pleats and folds of her dress. But what impressed her most were the eyes; they seemed real and alive, and she could see in them the feeling that burned in her every time she was in his presence. It was startling to see that expression looking at her from her own eyes, knowing that he had seen it vividly enough to capture it in the sketch.

"Do you like it?" he said.

"It's lovely. No one's ever sketched me before."

"You're a good model."

She was very aware of him beside her, looking over her shoulder at the sketchboard.

"You're very beautiful," he said. "One needn't be an artist to see that."

She felt he was on the verge of something more, but the sound of a horse turning into the drive made them both look up. It was the Hartley buggy again, only this time Elizabeth Hartley was alone, wearing a wide-brimmed white hat, gripping the reins in white-gloved hands.

"Hullo," Elizabeth said, "I seem to be intruding again." She came up the steps, twirling her parasol, and kissed David on the cheek. "Miss Logan, we meet again." Her eyes fell on the sketchboard leaning against the backrest of the swing. "Ah, you've been working. You really must tell me when you've a model coming, and I'll stay away."

Jennie flushed, recognizing the slight. It was obvious now that the visit on Friday had been Elizabeth's diplomatic opening, to prepare the way for her to come back alone.

Elizabeth held the sketchboard out at arm's length. "It's very good, David. But then you know I've always had faith in your work, even though you're such a perfectionist about letting it be seen." She cast a frankly examining glance at Jennie, as if to compare her with the impression she had garnered from the sketch, then put the board down again. "However, it's not so good as some you did of me. I still have them. I wouldn't part with them for anything."

"Actually, we'd just finished," David said. "May I offer you something, Elizabeth? A glass of mineral water?"

Elizabeth wrinkled her nose. "The health-giving local water? No, thank you." She smiled brilliantly at Jennie. "Only the summer people think it's special. Besides, I can't stay. I only came to extend an invitation. You remember Jamie Willis, don't you?"

"I remember Willis. What about him?"

"He's coming to visit next week. Edward invited him up. He heard you were still in town, and he said he'd like to see you."

"I can't imagine why. He's disliked me ever since Pamela made it clear she preferred me to him."

"Yes, poor Jamie, that was a shock. He always thought he was especially favored there. He was the only one of Pamela's suitors her father actually liked."

"He was the only one who made an effort to flatter the man."

"Well, be that as it may, he asked to see you. Perhaps he's mellowed. He's become quite successful, you know. His paintings sell very well. He's quite the darling of certain circles in New York. Come over next Tuesday. We'll have a picnic by the lake. It'll be fun."

"No promises," David said, "but I'll consider it."

"Oh, do come. You really must get out more." She turned to Jennie. "And I do want you to come, Miss Logan. I've promised Jamie introductions to all the young ladies in town this season. He knows me too well, he says—I'm no more suitable for a flirtation than an old stick. He's really quite charming. Not like old stubborn David here, who's always painting pictures no one understands."

"Thank you," Jennie said, thinking, I'm not going to fall for precious Jamie and leave your way to David clear. "That's very good of you."

"May I offer you a ride back to town?"

"No, thank you. I prefer to walk."

"Well, remember, you're invited. It's 1212 Lakeshore Way. I'm sure Edward would like to see you again. He was quite taken with you."

She gave David a parting kiss, strolled back out the walk, and mounted to the buggy seat again. Jennie savored a small sense of victory; she was certain that Elizabeth, unaware she was here, had envisioned a different ending to this visit.

When the buggy was gone, David said, "Now would be a good time to feed those pigs. I made the poor things wait until you came. I promised, after all."

She laughed, happily aware that he was in effect closing Elizabeth out. They started across the yard toward the barn.

"I'll have to recommend you to the city fathers," she said. "They'll want you on their entertainment committee."

"Ah, but I'm particular who helps me feed my stock." He was smiling at her. "I know you forgave me my friends last week, but let me apologize for Elizabeth's rudeness just the same."

She felt he was creating between them a conspiracy of agreement about Elizabeth. It gave her the courage to be bold: "I don't think she likes me."

"Elizabeth dislikes other women as a class," he said and they both laughed.

He swung open the door and she followed him into the dimness of the corncrib. Two buckets of scraps stood against one wall. He took the lid from a large milk can and began pouring milk into the buckets. Their conspiracy of agreement was the opening she sought; she decided to risk it, to bring the subject into the open and close out Elizabeth's chances for good.

"I have the impression she's pursuing you," she said.

"Poor Elizabeth," he said. "At one time—this was before I met the Hartleys—I believe Elizabeth was in love with Jamie Willis. She had met him in New York, too, when Edward was still trying to be a painter. Then they invited Willis up to spend the summer, and when he met Pamela he lost all interest in Elizabeth." He set the milk can upright again and replaced the lid. From the corncrib he brought large handfuls of corn and dumped them into the buckets. "Then I met the Hartleys, and the pattern repeated itself—though I think Elizabeth believes there was more between us than actually existed. But the same thing happened—they invited me up to Chesapequa, and I met Pamela."

She held the door open for him and followed him outside, through the chicken yard toward the pig lot at the rear of the barn. "Poor Elizabeth has had a hard time these past three or four years," he said. "And she's become somewhat brazen as a result."

"It's really a shame," Jennie said. "She's very beautiful."

"Yes, I suspect because of her beauty she was very spoiled as a girl. Occasionally even now she puts me in mind of a spoiled child."

"I didn't want to be the one to say that," Jennie said. "I'm glad you have."

He laughed. They had reached the gate at the rear of the barn; beyond the fence lay the pig lot, a trough in the center, several pigs lying in muddy wallows.

David set the buckets down. "She's jealous of you."

Jennie felt a faint blush rise to her face. "Yes, I saw."

"She has reason to be jealous."

His voice was quiet now, intimate, and she saw in his eyes the look she was sure was in her own. The very sight of him had always brought that unexpected flicker of love alive within her; now she was sure that he, believing she was Pamela's ghost, had fallen in love with her, too. It was as if those mysterious encounters between one century and another had propelled them into an intimacy all out of proportion to the time they had known each other. The word had not been said, but the eyes gave everything away.

"If you'll go with me," he said, "I'll accept that invitation. You said you were alone most of the time—it would give you entrée to a circle here. And it would give me an excuse to see you again."

"I would love to go with you."

"Good." He unlatched the gate and set the buckets through. "I'll call for you at your hotel."

"Oh, no. I—I'd rather you didn't." She dared not let him discover she wasn't registered at the hotel. She could arrrange to meet him in the lobby this time, but if he called on her once he might call again, unannounced, and she would never be able to explain her lie about being a guest there. She had to prevent him from ever coming to the hotel. "I'd really rather come here and—"

"I insist," he said. "I can't have you walking this far day after day because I wish to see you." He smiled. "What would the city fathers say?"

“But you can’t come to the hotel. I’m sorry, you see . . .” She flushed, stammered, and feeling an edge of panic in her throat blurted out, “I’m afraid my husband wouldn’t understand.”

She watched his smile slowly fade. His face closed down over the emotion that had showed there a moment before, closing her out. “I see,” he said, and looked away, one hand on the gatepost. Then, abruptly, he picked up the buckets and started across the lot.

The pigs scrambled up from their wallows, squealing. She watched him bend to empty the buckets into the trough, the pigs grunting and snuffling, shouldering each other aside, snouts already rooting in the milky slop. He put his hands in his pockets and gazed off across the field, silent and still, his back like an affront to her. She was afraid now that he would send her away, that she had destroyed any chance of remaining with him long enough to learn how to save his life.

Finally he stooped, scooped up the handles of the buckets, and crossed the lot back to the gate. She waited, tremulous, as he latched the gate behind him.

“So it’s Mrs. Logan,” he said. “And that’s why you always chose to walk back to town.”

“Yes,” she said, falling in step beside him, anxious, afraid, as he started back through the chicken yard. He did not look at her. She had the strange feeling that if she didn’t say something now everything would be lost, but she had no idea what to say.

He crossed to the main entrance of the barn and threw open the big door. Inside, he flung the buckets into a corner, seized a pitchfork embedded in a mound of hay that had been thrown down from the loft, and began forking hay through the stanchions along the far wall like a man working off frustration. He still would not look at her.

“David,” she said, “please don’t be angry with me.”

He stopped then and thrust the fork straight down into the hay, still not turning around. She wanted to go to him, to touch that terribly stiff, rejecting back, but fear held her in place. Something rustled in the rafters overhead—a mouse scurrying between the joists of the loft floor, stopping, scurrying on. Behind her, the door creaked slowly shut, closing the room in a dim mysterious light.

Finally he said, “Why do you come here? Why did you let me believe you weren’t married?”

Was that an invitation to say what she really felt? She had no idea what he must think. Because of her unusual behavior in coming here she must seem approachable, but everything else about her must indicate she was not the kind of woman, married as she was, who would be receptive to advances from another man.

“I—I was afraid you would send me away,” she said.

He turned then. “Can you guess what it does to me to see you in that dress, looking so much like Pamela?”

She felt faint under the impact of his eyes. She was ashamed not to have realized how the dress might affect him, but she couldn’t be wrong about how he felt, this couldn’t all be only because she looked like Pamela. There was more there than anger; the pain in his eyes was far too intimately connected to what she knew showed in her own: the need, and the yearning, to express the powerful uprush of feeling that lay just behind her thoughts.

“Do you know what it does to me when you look at me like that?” he said. “When I see what I see in your eyes?”

“It is in your eyes, too,” she said, and knew that she had ripped away a barrier, that they were more intimate now than they had been a moment before.

“Yes,” he said, “it’s true. It’s more than I said. It’s not just because you wear Pamela’s dress. It’s not just because you look like her.”

“I know.”

“God forgive me, you’ve made me forget her.” Slowly, he advanced across the room until he was only touching distance away. “There is something magical about you. I have known you less than a week. I know hardly anything about you. But from the first, I’ve felt it between us. It’s as if I’ve known you for years, as if I’ve loved you for years.”

The word was out, the word she had so wanted to hear him say. “Yes,” she said, “it’s the same for me.”

She felt him drawing her to him, felt the whole length of her body pressing up against his. “Yes, David,” she said, “this was meant to happen,” and let herself be drawn up into the darkness of his kiss.

• • •

Once, before she was married, she had gotten drunk, alone, at night, on a low cliff over a moonlit sea, along the rocky coast of Maine. It was during the time she had become so disillusioned with life in the city, and when time for her vacation came, she had wanted only to be alone, some place where she might hide away from the world, in an unspoiled landscape touched only by those sights and sounds celebrating the blessedly non-human elements of the earth. She had rented an isolated cabin close to the sea and spent two weeks in total solitude, reading, listening to Beethoven and Brahms and Sibelius on the stereo she had brought with her, feeling herself slowly restored by the unearthly quiet and the sense outside of the desolate coastline and the sea and ships moving toward distant destinations. One day toward the end of her stay, there was a storm, one of those unexpected, violent summer storms, bringing with it a churning black and yellow sky, abrupt and shifting winds, and relentless rain. That night she curled up in her chair in the cabin, reading Robert Penn Warren's *World Enough and Time*, listening to the wind whistle and subside, surge and swirl through the trees outside. She was still drinking the wine she had opened for dinner, and she was not very far into the novel before she began to feel within herself the flicker of that profound emotion, the rising of the self to meet the beauty of the human soul in prose. The long, flowing sentences which seemed to rise right out of the heart, the celebration of the mysteries of humankind—it was the awareness of these things which she had found dying in herself in the city and which she had felt regenerating here in this quiet by the sea; and by eleven o'clock that night the storm and the book and the wine had all combined to lift her into a soaring high like none she had ever felt before. The wind continued to beat at the cabin—an occasional lunge rocking the windows in their frames—but the pelting of the rain against the panes had stopped when she put on her coat and boots to go out and look at the sea. The overcast had broken up enough to let the moon show through, turning the edges of the clouds a greenish yellow, and when she came out onto the edge of the bluff she saw the huge black mass of the sea heaving and smashing in explosions of white against the rocks below; and in her half-drunken exhilaration she had sensed the rocking of the waves against the lip of the earth communicated into her body in the only experience she knew that

could compare with this: feeling him move against her, in her, like those waves rising and falling and smashing against the rocks protecting the shore. She felt herself rise and ebb, rise and ebb, battering and battering against the barrier until, his voice constrained in an agony of tenderness, she heard him say, "*Jennie,*" and the sound of her own name coming from him just at that moment carried her up and atop the barrier, and with a small high cry she was over and beyond, into that beauty and serenity on the other side.

• • •

It seemed hours before she was completely aware of herself again. She was lying on her back in the hay, the dress twisted up about her hips. David lay beside her, eyes closed, one hand tangled in her hair. It was very quiet. Thin slices of sunlight angled through the cracks in the walls; a rope looped down from a pulley suspended from one of the rafters. Something rustled overhead —a swallow fluttering around its mud-daubed nest. She watched it disappear into the opening. A moment later it emerged again and fluttered across the silent, cathedral-like space beneath the rafters to light on the sill of a small window near the roof. It poised there for an instant, silhouetted against the blue sky; then it flicked away and was gone.

16

LATER, SHE WOKE on the bed in his attic studio, where they had retreated from the barn. She lay on her side, fully clothed, feeling the warmth of his chest against her back, the stir of his slow breathing in her hair, the weight of his arm, which lay across her so that his hand rested just beneath her breasts. It was warm in the room. The sun had gone down; beyond the skylight stretched the pale early evening sky. She stirred, turned in the embrace of his arm. He was still asleep. She was filled with a sense of wonder at what had happened, the sense that this was right, that she was at last where she belonged. She leaned down to kiss him softly. Then she disengaged from him as gently as she could and sat up on the edge of the bed.

How many times she had sat in this room in her own time, wondering what it looked like in his. The walls were painted a brilliant white; the floor was bare red-brown wood. With a small thrill, she saw the lidded box in which, in her own time, she had found the sketches. Near a worktable covered with brushes and tubes of paint stood an empty easel. There was a small pot-bellied stove, its length of pipe a stark black against the white wall. He obviously lived—slept—here, not, as she had thought, in the second-floor bedroom. That room, he had said earlier, he had entered only once since the day of Pamela's death. The memory of "waking" in that room—the strange bed, the ticking of the pendulum clock—separated from her now only by this thin floor, stirred a tremble of wonder inside her.

Across the room were framed canvases stacked neatly face to the wall. She went to kneel beside the canvases and turned one of them around. At first glance she thought it was an abstract painting: two blocks of color balanced against a background of brownish-black. Then, on closer look, she saw it was

an interior, a dim afternoon room somewhere in Europe. The purple square at the lower right was the edge of a bed, only partially visible. The smear of white on the left was a set of French doors in the far wall, opening out onto a shadowy iron-railed balcony, beyond which a narrow white road receded down a hill and disappeared into the pale greens and browns of a vineyard on the opposite hills. The sense of silence, of peaceful afternoon, of lush and lovely landscape just outside, seemed almost to vibrate from the canvas. And yet even now it still retained the impact, the impression, of an abstract painting. It startled and excited her: this was 1899 and a very original way of applying color to canvas. But unless she was able to find a way to save him, he was never going to live to achieve the greatness already evident in these canvases. It was an urgency that would not give her peace: the need to save him, and not knowing how.

She heard him stir, and turned to see him looking at her from the bed. He smiled and held out his hand. She went to kneel at the edge of the bed, so that her head was on a level with his. "I love you," she said.

He took her head in his hands and kissed her. She felt emotion twist into a lovely ache in the pit of her stomach.

"I fell asleep," he said.

"So did I. I woke only a few minutes ago. I was looking at your paintings."

He smiled. "And your opinion?"

"They're very beautiful."

"Hardly an unbiased critic, I trust."

"But truthful."

He kissed her again. "You're very sweet."

She crept into his arms. "I'm happy. I love this room. I wish I never had to leave it."

"Do you have to leave it soon?"

"No, I—I'll be alone tonight."

He was brushing the hair back away from her face. "There is something magical about you," he said. "What I feel for you is so strong it sometimes startles me."

"Don't think about it. Don't make me think about it. Accept it."

"I accept it. Gladly. I love you."

"And I love you."

"I'm glad. Because I am very serious. I was hoping for the right to ask you this before I knew your situation. But that doesn't change how I feel. I am planning to leave this town very soon. Will you go away with me, leave your husband?"

The possibility struck her with full force for the first time. There was nothing to prevent it. That was the answer—he would no longer be here, in reach of whomever was meant to kill him.

He seemed to take her silence for hesitation. "I know it's sudden. And soon. Probably too soon. But I sense you are like me; you are an unusual woman—else I wouldn't feel about you the way I do. You and I are not bound by the world's conventions. We'll go away—to Paris, Amsterdam, it doesn't matter. Come with me."

She thought about the enormity of it—to stay, and start a new life, in 1899.

"You don't love him," he said.

She thought of Michael—who, even if he could believe what was happening to her, would never be able to understand or to feel what it meant to her—and was saddened to realize it was true. "No." *Forgive me, Michael.* "I thought I did when we were married."

"It would require leaving what is obviously a comfortable life for a precarious future, but—"

She stopped his mouth with her hand, the force of her decision, the emotion it released, welling up in her. "Don't talk anymore. I'll go away with you, I'll go anywhere you want, David. But soon. Now. Tonight."

He removed her hand, kissed it. "Soon. But not now. When Rachel and Charles are safely out of Hubbard's reach, then we can go. I'm sorry if it seems I'm putting Rachel ahead of us, but I must. Once she is safe, my debt to Pamela is paid."

That rush of hope slowly died inside her. "I understand."

"You said you would be alone tonight."

"Yes, and tomorrow. He . . . he's away on business."

"He leaves you alone very often?"

"Yes. He's in New York much of the time. He's in the stock market."

"Will you stay with me tonight?"

"Tonight and every night I can."

"I have to take the mare in to be shod in an hour or so. The smith is expecting me. Will you mind waiting here alone?"

"Oh, take me with you." The thought of seeing the nineteenth-century Chesapequa excited her.

"Won't it be dangerous for you to be seen with me?"

"I don't think so. My husband's not here. No one else knows me—except the desk people at the hotel."

"Good. We'll go together then." He stood up. "I'll see if I can find something to eat downstairs."

After he had gone, she lay back on the bed, thinking of Europe, of life with David in the Paris or Amsterdam of 1899, of steamships on the Atlantic, and carriages in the Bois de Boulogne, and endless fields of yellow wheat in the South of France. The enormity of what she had agreed to was a little frightening, but something deep inside her was sure that it was right. Something had been unlocked inside her now, some tiny key in the core of her being that had remained unturned until today. The memory of making love in the barn seeped slowly into her—the heat, and the sunshine falling onto the hay, her overwhelming pleasure at the soft insistent warmth of David's mouth on hers, the hard length of his body forcing her down, his rough hands thrusting the dress up her thighs.

It was then, remembering the feel of his hands, that the thought struck her: what if he had removed the dress?

The question seemed to drain all sound from the room. She was aware of nothing but this new fear sucking all her thoughts toward it. Would she have disappeared right before his eyes, thrown back into her own time? She would have to find that out—now, before tonight.

She got to her feet and with trembling fingers began unfastening the buttons up the back of the dress. She untied the belt and draped it over a chair. Pulled her arms out of the sleeves. Listened. David was moving about in the kitchen, two flights below. She pulled the dress up over her head and dropped it on the bed.

And snatched it up again, trembling at what she had done.

If she did flash back into her own time, the dress would remain. She would be forever separated from him, on the other side of the time barrier, unable to alter his fate. But she was still here; she had been separated from the dress for only a second, but she was still here. Bravely, she loosened her grip on the dress; held it away from her; dropped it onto the bed again.

Nothing happened. She was still here, in his attic studio, standing by the same bed; his canvases were still racked against the wall; his easel still stood beside the worktable. She sank to her knees and laid her head gratefully on the soft folds of the dress. Once she was in the past she could safely remove it and remain, just as she could in her own time. It was transportation, nothing more.

• • •

After they had eaten, they started for town, the mare fastened by a lead to the rear of the buggy. The sun had gone, but it was still light. They took the road down the hill and turned left along the lake. The buggy seemed to skim along the hard-packed road surface, the ground fleeing past on either side, in almost soundless flight. It was exhilarating—the cool air on her face, the clopping of the horses, the occasional outbursts of their breathing, the slap and rattle of the traces. At the bottom end of the lake, they clattered across a wooden bridge, the one where she had first seen that carriage full of women. A few hundred yards beyond the bridge, they came to a crossroads and turned right, through hedgerows flanking grassy fields. Twilight was setting in; the pale blue of the sky seeped into a muddy green along the horizon. A house appeared in a clump of trees off to the left; she heard children's voices drifting across the evening air, saw the white blurs of their figures: playing on a swing.

Up ahead, she saw another carriage approaching. It excited her, as if the sight of it, unconnected to her in any way, finally proved she was really here, in the nineteenth century. It was drawn by two large horses, necks arched, prancing big-footed toward her. As the carriage approached, the horses shied a bit, tossing their heads, and she saw there were two couples behind the driver. The women, in large flowered hats, looked at her across a barrier of almost a hundred years; the men nodded and touched their hat brims; and the carriage passed on behind her, the sound of the horses receding to the rear. It was like

finding herself suddenly in a movie, lifted from the audience and taken right into the story on the screen.

They passed another house, closer to the road, and then another; and then the road widened, the houses became more numerous, set back on grassy lawns; and then David turned the buggy into what seemed to be a side street, between two buildings, and then to the right again onto a wide boulevard teeming with carriages and people.

David smiled at her. "I suppose after New York, Chesapequa is restful to you. To me, even this is hectic."

"Oh, but it's beautiful," Jennie said.

She was awed. She recognized nothing, though this was surely Broad Street, the main street even in her own time. But it was much wider and lined with huge trees, two and three stories tall. Another buggy, drawn by a prancing black horse, skimmed along in front of them; she could see the wide-brimmed hats of two women above the back seat. A larger carriage—a kind of omnibus, with a placard on the side reading HENRY HUDSON HOTEL—came out of a side street ahead and crossed the wide boulevard. Other carriages lined the edges of the street; on her right a young woman in a long dark skirt, a white shirtwaist and a straw hat, was being helped into one of them, a surrey with a flat fringed top. David reined the horse to a walk to allow a party of pedestrians to cross the street—ladies in long dresses and big flowered hats, men in derbies and straw boaters. The stately movement of the women enthralled her; she had again the feeling of being in a movie.

They were passing hotels now, long pillared verandas two stories high running the entire length of the facades, fronted by tall trees. She recognized the cupolas and balconies of the Henry Hudson Hotel on her left. A flagpole thrust up from the roof of the hotel on her right. Here and there in the twilight she made out the figures of people sitting on the verandas or ascending the wide stairs.

Then David turned off the boulevard into a narrower street; they passed a barber shop, a pawn shop, then a warehouse with a ramp leading up to a platform running along one side. The buggy came to a halt in front of a two-story clapboard building with huge double doors standing open. Three

horseshoes were nailed upside down above the doors, through which she could see the reflected glow of the forge fire inside.

David dismounted from the buggy and wrapped the reins around the hitching post.

"I won't be long."

She was left alone in the buggy. Behind her, she heard the mare snort and stamp, swishing at flies. She could hardly believe this was real. The huge open doors of the smithy glowed with the light inside. Two small boys, wearing kneepants and caps with narrow little brims, leaned timidly against the doorjamb, as if uncertain they would be allowed in. From inside came the tap-*whang*-tap-*whang* of hammers on iron, and once there was the *swsshshsh* of hot iron thrust into cold water, and the tap-*whang*-tap-*whang* of the hammers again. The front of the shop was a confusion of iron rods leaning against the wall, broken wagon wheels, a ploughshare, something that looked like a discarded butter churn. Two or three horses were tethered to the hitching post, and at one corner of the building a pile of discarded horseshoes rose almost to the height of the buggy.

After a while the sound of the hammers ceased and David came out, followed by an older, burly man wearing a cap and a great, bushy moustache. A heavy leather apron flopped against his legs.

"All right, Mr. Reynolds," he said, "let's take a look at her."

As he passed the buggy, she saw him cast a sidelong glance at her, curious, inquisitive.

Behind her, she heard him sweet-talking the mare, and she turned to see him bending to examine its hooves, one hand gently stroking its flank. "Ayuh," he said. "Seems all right. No hoof cracks this time. Shoes pretty worn, though. Can't reset 'em—need new ones."

"That's all right," David said.

The blacksmith untied the mare and led it around beside the buggy. "You, boy," he called to one of the boys in the doorway. "Lead her around a mite, so I can take a look at her gait."

"Her gait's fine," David said. "You set those shoes yourself."

"Can't hurt to look," the smith said.

Several other men had come to the door of the shop now, watching the boy lead the mare around. She felt the force of their stares and when she looked at them saw their eyes dart furtively away. She caught again that sidelong, measuring look of the blacksmith; and then she understood, remembering what Mrs. Bates had said—*caused quite a little scandal, him taking up with the other woman so soon after his wife's death*—and with a dawning of fearful wonder she realized she was seeing the word made flesh, was actually watching the beginning of that scandal. *She* was "the other woman" he had taken up with, not Elizabeth; *she* was the woman seen leaving the scene of the crime; *she* was the woman suspected of murdering him.

The boy had led the horse into the smithy; the crowd had gone back inside. She tried to conquer her fright. She couldn't have done it; she would never kill him. She would die herself before killing him. She must have been present, must have seen it happen and then was seen herself, grief-stricken and afraid, running away afterward. That had to be what the story meant. But did it? Could a situation develop where she might kill him, somehow, accidentally? She felt a sudden need to see him, touch him, assure herself that he would never die because of her. She got down from the buggy and hurried across the smithy yard to the doorway.

David was nowhere to be seen. In the center of the big cavernous room stood a huge brick forge, its open hearth casting a hot glow on the faces of the men standing about, shadowing the distant walls. At the near end of the forge a boy was pumping at the long wooden lever above his head, activating the bellows. The smith had just finished paring the horse's left rear hoof; he set it down now, watching as the horse tested it cautiously against the floor. With a pair of tongs he seized a red-hot horseshoe from the fire and knocked it against a nearby anvil, a shower of tiny sparks scattering to the floor. Holding the tongs in one hand, talking softly, he ran his other hand down the mare's hind leg, lifted the hoof to his cradled knees and set the cherry-red shoe against it. Jennie flinched, but the horse didn't move. Thick white smoke spiraled up, then the smith lifted the shoe away, plunged it with a *swsshshsh* of steam into an iron-bound wooden tub, and lifted it out gone gray and cold. As he reached for hammer and nails to set the shoe, his eyes met hers and held there, his curiosity taken by surprise. Then she saw David at the rear of the room, talking

to some of the men. He did not see her, and she could not go in there, past the smith, to where David stood among that crowd of men. She crossed the smithy yard again and climbed back up into the buggy.

She couldn't have been the one who killed him. But the story said he died and she was seen leaving the scene of the crime. But now that she knew that, she could make sure it didn't come true. The story was fixed, handed down by word of mouth through three-quarters of a century, but surely *her* life had never existed before, she had never existed before. It had to be possible for her to alter the past, to influence events so that he would not die. She was being sent here to save his life—anything else was unthinkable.

It was almost dark now. The clop-clop of hooves against cobbles approached from out of the darkness behind her—a buggy drawn by a dun-colored mare and carrying one man dressed all in black so that he was almost indistinguishable in the darkness. As the buggy drew even with her, the clopping of the horse slowed, and she saw the white of the man's face turned toward her under the black of his hat. The buggy passed on into the dark, and she stirred in the seat, anxious for David to return.

The light from the forge fire swelled through the open doors of the smithy like a giant lantern in the night, casting eerie shadows against the inner walls. She could see the iron rods racked against the walls now and a buggy body suspended from the ceiling. From out of the darkness where the buggy had disappeared a few minutes before came the slow ticking of iron against the cobblestones and the vague shape of a buggy coming at a walk along the near side of the street; it eased off onto the roadside and came to a halt under a tree at the opposite corner of the blacksmith shop, and she saw that it was drawn by the same dun-colored mare which had passed before. Suddenly she was frightened. In the darkness beneath the tree, she could see only the immobile horse, the dark bulk of the buggy, the fixed and motionless outline of the man, staring at her.

She was relieved to see David come out of the smithy, a shadowy figure leading the mare behind him.

"I'm sorry you had to wait," he said. "It was longer than I expected."

He tied the mare's lead to the back of the buggy and came around the other side. She heard movement from across the smithy yard and turned to see that

the other buggy had emerged into the light and stood facing them across the width of the yard.

"Mr. Reynolds?" It was the man in the buggy, his voice ringing out in the silence like iron struck against iron.

David slowly turned, one hand still on the buggy. "Mr. Hubbard. I'm sorry. I didn't see you there."

"You will not see me here much longer," the man said. "I stopped for one purpose only. And if it were not my duty as a father, I would as leave let this conversation pass. But it is my duty, and I will see it done, distasteful as it is to me. I see you have quickly forgotten what little grief might have been expected from a man such as yourself. I am not surprised. But what's done is done—I will answer to my Maker for that mistake. But there is this that I can do. I understand young Stickney is in town. That he has tried to renew his acquaintanceship with my Rachel. It is well known that he is your friend. You might remind him that I do business with the army and that I happen to know his commanding officer. Tell him, Mr. Reynolds, that it would be well for him to keep away from my family."

Hubbard's horse snorted and tossed its head, setting the harness chains to jingling. In the light from the smithy doors, the old man seemed gaunt and haggard, as if eaten by some inner pain.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Mr. Hubbard," David said. "But if it will give you any comfort, I can tell you that Lieutenant Stickney left town yesterday evening. I don't believe you need worry about him any longer."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps he has the foresight not to intrude where he is not wanted. And then again it may be that he has found another to try where he has failed. You came to my house on Saturday, Mr. Reynolds. In my absence. You harassed my housekeeper for doing what she is paid to do. Do not try that again. These are the last words I wish to speak to you—stay away from me and mine." And with a flick of his whip, the old man turned the horse, and the buggy wheeled in a tight circle out into the street and spun away into the darkness out of which it had come.

David remained standing beside the buggy as the sound of Hubbard's horse receded away down the street. Then, expressionless, he swung up into the seat.

She touched his arm. "David, I'm frightened. He sounds dangerous."

He flicked the reins and started the buggy out along the street. “I don’t believe he’s as dangerous as he sounds. And at any rate there will be no way he can discover anything until Rachel is safely away. Don’t worry.”

They made a turn at an intersection and clopped along between the streetlamps of a narrow street, past the lighted windows of houses set back among the trees. Then the streetlamps fell away and they were in open country, moving through darkness alleviated only by a faint starlight, the roadside hedges vague moving shapes on either side. The night air was cool and carried the sweet smell of the fields. She clung to David’s arm, listening to the chirping of crickets, occasionally seeing a bat wheel across the night sky.

“David,” she murmured, “isn’t there some way Rachel can elope without . . . without involving you?”

With gentle fingers he lifted her chin, and she looked up to see his smiling eyes, a length of dark hair falling across his brow, and—above and beyond that—the vast night sky, displaying its scattering of stars.

“Don’t be afraid,” he said. “Once Rachel is gone, once he’s presented with a *fait accompli*, he will give in. He has already proved that.”

She felt a surge of emotion tighten her throat. “Please be careful.”

He bent his head and kissed her. In the darkness of the kiss, she was aware of the rhythmic gait of the horse, the rocking of the buggy. There was no way she could tell him that this was different, that Hubbard might react differently this time, that he was in danger and was going to be killed. There was no way she could tell him that Hubbard was the least of her fears; she had almost welcomed Hubbard’s appearance, his pointed threats, because it allowed her to believe that David was in danger from some source other than herself, allowed her for a moment to escape the fear that in some way she could not as yet predict she herself was destined to kill him.

17

"I'm just worried," Michael said. "That's why I asked to see you. She's withdrawing more all the time. Some days go by she hardly talks to me."

There was a creak as Dr. Salzman leaned back in his chair, shadowy behind the single lamp on his desk. "You say she's withdrawing. I take it you mean that in a clinical sense. Could you describe it?"

"Well, we haven't made love in weeks. I have the feeling she doesn't want me to touch her anymore. And she broods a lot, wanders around looking off into space. And I don't know. She's just in a different world all the time."

"What you're describing sounds less like Jennie's withdrawing from reality than that she's withdrawing from you. You mustn't persuade yourself that she's sicker than she is."

"Well, damn it, she is withdrawing from me. And I don't like it. What do you expect? When I get this feeling she's thinking about some other man, that she prefers some other man—"

"A fantasy man."

"I know she's sick, for God's sake, but that doesn't help. The way she acts, I feel like she really is being unfaithful to me."

"You feel frustrated and jealous."

"Of course I feel frustrated and jealous."

The chair creaked again: Salzman leaning forward into the circle of light. "Let me point out to you, Mr. Logan, that you're reacting to Jennie as if her hallucinations were real. You're reinforcing her sickness. And that's harmful not only to her but to you as well. And to the marriage itself, I might add. I know this is all very difficult for you, but you can't allow yourself to be drawn into

her delusion. You can't allow yourself to feel you're competing with another man."

"Well, I just wish I could see some progress out of all this therapy. Isn't there some way to speed up the process?"

"Therapy is unavoidably a slow and gradual process. In this instance, I wouldn't recommend any of the more drastic measures like hospitalization—not unless Jennie were to show marked deterioration. Which I do not at all anticipate. I think it much better if she continues to lead as normal a life as possible. And that depends to a large extent on you. I can understand your impatience and your frustration, but you have to remember that the way you relate to Jennie has a great effect on her emotional health. You have to make her feel that she can trust you and lean on you."

• • •

That night, trying to follow Salzman's advice, he took Jennie out to dinner in an old wood-paneled restaurant left over from Chesapequa's resort days. He tried to pretend that nothing was wrong between them, but though she seemed grateful he could tell her mind was really elsewhere. At home, he made a point of lighting only candles in the living room and brought out the present he had bought her that afternoon: a pendant shaped like a butterfly, in a filigree of gold, with multi-colored enameled wings.

"It's handmade," he said. "I thought maybe you could wear it with your white dress."

She seemed genuinely touched, fondling the pendant in her lap. "It's lovely, Michael. I'll wear it always, whenever I wear the dress." But when she leaned over to kiss him she still wore that sad, preoccupied look she had had all during dinner.

He poured them each a glass of brandy and took the chair across from her, wondering how to bring her out of herself. He tried giving her an account of his day, funny things that had happened in the office; she used to like that when they lived in the city, before she had discovered he was having an affair, but the little response she showed him now was strange, as if she felt sorry for him and was humoring him. It made him feel awkward, as if he were courting her all over again and she had decided he wasn't good enough for her.

"It's nice like this," he said. "Candlelight. Just the two of us." He took a sip of the brandy. "All I need now is a pipe. Would you like me with a pipe?"

She blushed, then went pale and looked away.

"Did I say something wrong?" he said.

When she didn't respond, the old anger welled up in him again. "You actually blushed. In all the years we've been married, you never blushed until we moved here and this thing started. Does *he* smoke a pipe? Is that it?"

Now she did look at him. "Please don't start this, Michael."

"Start this? I've tried all night to be nice. All you can do is sit there and think about some other man, and you say don't start this? What do you think I am?"

"You're jealous." She put her brandy glass down. "How can you be jealous of a man you don't even believe exists?"

"I'll tell you how I can be jealous. Because I know you've invented him to *make* me jealous, that's how. How do you think it makes me feel, sitting here watching you dream about some other man?"

"I'm not inventing anything, Michael. Something terribly real is happening to me, and you're not helping by doing this."

"Helping? How about you helping for a change? You can start by believing what Salzman tells you. You've invented this man to punish me, and I can't take it anymore. If you're bent on punishing me, do it out in the open where I can deal with it."

She ran from the room and fled headlong up the stairs. He put his glass down and raced after her, but by the time he reached the bedroom, she had slammed and locked the door.

"Jennie?" He rattled the knob. "Jennie, open this door."

After a moment, the door clicked open. Jennie stood just inside, her arms full of bedding. She was crying. "I'm sorry you don't believe me, Michael. I'm sorry for everything, but I guess it has to be this way. I'm going to sleep in the attic from now on."

Her tears made it real; his anger faded away before the thought that he was doing precisely what Salzman had warned him against. Feeling drained, he watched her retreat down the hall and mount the stairs to the attic.

18

JENNIE WALKED along a shady side street, one hand holding up her lacy white skirts, the other clutching the handbag she had brought with her from her own time. It was a street of small shops, lined with heavily foliaged trees; the sidewalk was splattered with shadows. A hansom cab clip-clopped past, in the passenger seat a young man who glanced with interest at her. Three blocks ahead of her, the street sloped slightly downward to end at the very edge of the lake: a patch of grass, glittering water, the terraced edge of a lakeside restaurant. A large lakeboat was pulling away from the dock below the restaurant's terrace. She was dazzled, alone for the first time in the Chesapequa of 1899.

She turned into a narrower street, looking for something familiar. Four blocks and a turn to the left farther on, she found it: the pawnshop she remembered from the buggy ride to the blacksmith's. She descended the two steps from street level, pushed open the door and went in.

It was very dim inside. A counter topped by a high railing separated the main room from the area just inside the door. Crowded shelves rose ceiling-high on both walls, receding back into the dimness. In the center of the counter was a window like a bank teller's cage.

A bell had rung when the door swung closed. Now an old man shuffled out from the rear of the shop, wearing a vest and garters on his sleeves. "Yes?" he said. "May I help you?"

She opened her handbag and laid out on the counter the jewelry she had brought from her own time, which had been left her by her mother. "I wonder if you could evaluate these for me?"

He picked up a brooch from the small pile, eyed her through his rimless glasses. “Evaluate? You want to pawn them?”

“Yes. I’d like to sell them.”

He fingered the brooch. “Beautiful craftsmanship. But you understand, with a jewel, the craftsmanship means not so much. It is the stone itself. I have a glass in the back of the shop. Would you be so kind to wait?”

The jewelry brought almost three hundred dollars, in large unfamiliar bills. With the money safely secured in her handbag, she found her way back to the street of small shops, just up from the lake. Here she bought a parasol, a nightgown, some underthings, and another dress. When she had all the clothes she needed, she bought a valise in which to carry them whenever she made the transition from one time to another. They could be left in the Miller house each time she returned from the past. The white dress, the magic dress, she always took home with her. It was much too precious to let out of her sight. She found a small stationer’s, where she bought a writing tablet, a pencil, and a packet of envelopes; then she descended the sun-dappled street to the edge of the lake and mounted the steps to the restaurant’s terrace.

A red-and-white striped awning shaded the terrace. She chose a table near the railing, just above the dock and the glittering lake extending beyond it. The other customers were mostly women, three and four at a table, like floral clusters in their resplendent hats and dresses. Beyond the dock, several ducks skimmed among the lily pads at the water’s grassy edge. Farther up the shore was a boathouse and a smaller dock; a group of boaters—young men in white trousers, girls in summer dresses—were pulling a canoe up onto the dock. From across the water drifted the murmur of voices, a quiet splash, the slap of a paddle against the resonant side of the canoe. How she loved this time, and how she wanted to remain here. And it wasn’t only because of the beauty by which she was surrounded; she knew this beauty was not to be found everywhere in 1899. But she felt at home here, as she had never felt anywhere else. It had to be that she was meant to remain here and live on in this time.

And it was worth whatever was necessary to save David’s life and make that possible. She opened the tablet and began to write:

Dear Mr. Hubbard:

> I think you would be interested to learn that Lt. Charles Stickney has not returned to West Point as you have been led to believe. He is staying secretly at the Copper Inn. I understand your concern about keeping this outsider away from your family.
>
> A friend

She excused herself to the waiter who had arrived just as she finished sealing the note in an envelope, then made her way back through the tables of women to the steps leading down from the terrace. It was strange to feel that they had not been able to see beyond her own nineteenth-century exterior to what she really was: a woman from a time in which they had all been dead for years.

Carrying the valise with her purchases, she returned up into town to the offices of Matthew Hubbard & Co., which she had located earlier. She found a boy idling on the street and gave him a dollar with instructions to deliver the note to Matthew Hubbard in person. As she watched him disappear into the building, she tried to convince herself that it had been the right thing to do.

There was no way she could envision being responsible for David's death. It had to have been Hubbard, and the elopement had to have been the cause. And the only way to prevent it was to prevent the elopement. Surely that was not wrong. Hubbard knew nothing of any plans for an elopement; he had already defeated Stickney's attempts to see Rachel; her note gave him all the information he needed to foil any further attempts. Surely, given these facts, he would not harm Stickney physically. Whatever harm she was doing to Stickney and Rachel was probably only temporary; but even if it separated them permanently, what was the loss of one's first love against the necessity of saving David's life?

But as she went to find a hansom cab to take her around to the other side of the lake, where she could make the transition back into her own time, she carried still within her the anxiety which had become almost a permanent part of her being. She had no certainty that Hubbard would react as she hoped—or that it was possible to alter the past at all.

• • •

On the following Monday, the day before the rendezvous with Rachel was scheduled, she told Michael she was leaving to spend another two days at Fire Island. But as soon as she was home from her session with Dr. Salzman, she made the return into 1899, to David. She was afraid to ask about Stickney, for fear he would read in her face the guilt she felt at what she had done, but she could tell that her note had had no effect: he was full of plans for their going away together. They spent the afternoon traveling about in the buggy while he visited a man who had expressed interest in buying the buggy and the mare, and arranged with his landlord the termination of the lease on the house. At each stop she waited alone in the buggy seat, unable to share his enthusiasm because she knew that unless Hubbard had acted on her note as she had hoped, none of this was going to matter.

That evening they sat on the porch in the hazy blue twilight while David cleaned some brushes he had been using that morning. He had placed a kerosene lantern on the porch railing, where its soft glow attracted a swarm of night insects, but it was still just light enough to see without it. She had just finished chipping ice from the icebox in the kitchen for the pitcher of iced tea she was carrying out onto the porch when Lieutenant Stickney rode into the yard and dismounted.

If he was surprised to see her there, his greeting gave no indication of it. He took a chair across the table from David, and Jennie set the pitcher down between them, retreating back against the wall, out of the light. His arrival created a confusion of feelings within her: hope that her note had succeeded, fear that it had not, or that it had and he knew she had sent it.

Stickney balanced a half-smoked cigar on the edge of the table, withdrew a crumpled yellow paper from his tunic pocket and handed it across to David. "Read that."

David read it through and looked up, surprised. "You're ordered back to the Point. I don't understand it. I thought you'd got leave."

"I don't understand it, either," Stickney said. "The wire arrived this morning. You note it implies the reason is something in my conduct here. Now what the devil have I done, and how have they learned of it?"

Beyond the circle of lantern-light, fireflies winked in the dark; Jennie pressed herself against the wall, wishing to be invisible.

David smoothed the telegram out on the table. "It's Hubbard. You remember, Jennie? We encountered Hubbard in town," he said to Stickney, "at the blacksmith's, shortly after you were here last. I told him you'd gone, but evidently he wired the Point to make sure. When he found out you hadn't returned to duty he must have gotten suspicious and applied pressure to have you ordered back. He said he knew your commanding officer."

"Damn," Stickney said. "I beg your pardon, Miss Logan. I hadn't thought of that, but it's true, he does." He took a last drag on the cigar and threw it angrily out into the yard. "The man has defeated me again."

"What do you mean?" David said.

"Read the wire, David. I'm ordered back by tomorrow noon. The rendezvous with Rachel was set for tomorrow night. How am I ever going to see her again? I'm forbidden to contact her, you're forbidden to contact her. Hubbard's even threatened to send her to live with an aunt in Virginia. What if he makes good that threat before I can get away from the Point again and devise another way to get to her?"

Jennie remained in the shadows, afraid they would see the conflicting emotions on her face. Inside her, guilt fought with a rising elation: now even if the elopement did eventually succeed, she would have extricated David from its fatal consequences because it would have to happen long after the story said it had caused his death.

"That doesn't mean the man has won," David said. "There's no reason I shouldn't meet with Rachel instead of you. *I'll* keep the rendezvous tomorrow night. I can make the arrangements, spirit Rachel away myself and put her on the train to you at the Point."

Stickney had stood up to pace about the porch; now he leaned back against the railing, moodily lit another cigar. "I'm grateful for the offer, David, but it's me Hubbard is set against. The risk is mine to take, not yours."

"Don't be stubborn, Charles. Let's not confuse this as a matter of honor." David grinned. "I'm a civilian in any case—I'm not bound by your officer's code."

"It has nothing to do with that, David. We both know Hubbard's a dangerous man—"

"Not really."

"All right, we suspect it. Don't deny it, your impression of him is the same as mine. He was always a forbidding man. He saw Pamela's marriage as a desertion, and her death has by all indications left him unbalanced. We both know he's capable of violence if he's crossed now on the subject of Rachel."

"All the more reason I should keep the rendezvous. As you say, it was my marriage to Pamela that's made him what he is. I owe this to you and Rachel."

"That's not what I meant to imply, David."

"Be sensible, Charles. This wire means he seriously suspects you of plotting to steal Rachel away. You don't know what kind of pressure he's applied. He may have arranged to have you transferred, sent out West for all you know."

"If it came to that, I'd resign my commission rather than lose Rachel."

"That will do you no good if he sends Rachel to Virginia. Do you know the name of this aunt, or where she lives?"

"No," Stickney said. "No, I don't."

"You see what I mean. Even if she's Hubbard's sister, I assume she's married, she no longer bears that name. And it would be no help if she did, without even knowing what part of Virginia to search."

"Yes," Stickney said. "Yes, you're right. I can't risk that, can I?"

"No, you can't. You have to let me keep that rendezvous. Now sit down, and let's decide how best to do what has to be done."

"Excuse me," Jennie said. "I think this ice has melted. I'll get some more." She carried the pitcher back into the darkened house, set it down on the kitchen table, and sank into a chair. It had been all she could do to keep silent outside, to keep from crying out at the knowledge that, far from removing David from danger, her act had thrust him even closer to that death the story said was coming.

• • •

After Stickney had gone, they retreated in the flickering shadows of an oil lamp up the stairs to the attic studio. She was silent all during preparations for bed, and it was only when they were lying side by side, the lamp turned very low on the bedside table, that she could bring herself to really look at him. He leaned above her, regarding her with fiercely gentle eyes while he stroked the

hair back from her temples. The small circle of lamplight seemed charged with that magic aura she had always felt in his presence.

"It won't be long now," he said. "Another few days. Then we'll never be apart again."

The affection in his voice and touch sent a new spasm of guilt worming through her. Wordlessly, she took his face in her hands and pulled him down beside her, wanting to say so many things: that she was sorry, that she was frightened by this thing she didn't understand, that she would yet find a way to undo what she had done. She welcomed the warm descent of his mouth on hers, the soft yielding of her breasts under his chest, the sleek slide of his fingers down the curve of her hip to bring about that final fusion of body to body, softness to solidity; she wanted this, to express in physical touch what she could not say in words, to lose herself in lovely bliss, where nothing seemed to matter except this sweet and soaring tenderness they created together. There was here no distance between his time and hers; time ceased to be, all incompleteness ceased to be and they were lifted up toward that level where all existence seemed one and inseparable—timeless, immortal.

As always, it seemed a long time before she descended again into that separate being she recognized as herself. He lay beside her, examining her face with soft and meditative eyes. She reached out to touch the curve of his chest, sad to be back once more where time mattered and moved again in its inexorable sequence of events.

"Do you really have to go?" she said. "Tomorrow night?"

"You know I do."

"I wish you didn't have to."

"I know. But Charles exaggerates the danger."

"Are you sure? Even if Rachel's father doesn't discover you, even if you're only seen near the McIver house the night she runs away, he'll know you did it."

"I doubt I'll get Rachel away tomorrow night, on such short notice. She'll have arrangements to make. It may take another day, even two."

"But even so, if you're seen in that neighborhood tomorrow night, he'll make the connection when Rachel's gone. He'll know you got to her then."

"That's possible." He was silent for a moment. "There's a way around that. Elizabeth's invitation was for tomorrow afternoon. The Hartleys live just down the road from the McIvers. I'll go to Elizabeth's picnic; that will explain my being in the vicinity."

She toyed with his hair. "I was invited to that picnic, too, you know."

He smiled. "And I suppose you're going to accept."

"You know I'm going with you. To the picnic, and to the McIvers'. You said there was no danger, so you have no right to stop me. You can't stop me, because I'll hire a cab if I have to and follow you there."

He smiled again. "You really would, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would."

"In that case, I guess I have no choice If you're going to be there, I don't want you following me alone." He pulled her over against him, caressed the slant of her neck just below her hair. "You're magic, you know. There's never been magic for me like this."

The flame lurched above the wick of the lamp, sending a flicker of light around the shadowy walls. How peaceful this would be, lying face to face, if only she could escape the fear that her attempt to save his life was doomed to fail. Or if she could only believe in something which would explain, and help her to accept, whatever was meant to be.

"David, do you believe in . . . in immortality?"

"I don't know. I can't imagine a heaven that wouldn't have trees and fields and oceans just like the earth. I don't think I believe in the God of the churches, but whenever I'm engaged in a genuinely creative act I feel I'm part of something larger than myself, that I'm expressing some immortal creative force we've come to call God. I felt it just now, with you. And I think that's what the phrase 'let your acts glorify God' really means: that when you act out of love, creatively, you express a part of that immortal force, whatever it is. I think that's why I paint. Sometimes, working on a painting, I feel blessed, touched by a creativity greater than my own." He stirred beside her. "I've been working on a painting that gives me that feeling. It still needs a touch or two, but I want you to see it."

He threw on a robe, removed a cloth from a painting mounted on the easel, and brought the painting back across the room. "I was working on it this

morning. I've been doing it from memory—the memory of you that second day you came, as you were leaving after feeding the chickens. Do you remember?"

He knelt beside the bed, balancing the frame on his knees, and turned up the wick of the lamp. Jennie was awed. The painting showed her standing in the dappled shade of the tree at the rear corner of the house, half-turned away, looking back over her shoulder. It was the painting she had first seen in Mrs. Bates' historical society, the painting which hung there even now, three-quarters of a century into the future.

• • •

That night she lay awake long after the even rhythm of his breathing told her he was asleep. She lay as close to him as she could, pressed against the warmth of his body, listening to his breathing. The house was silent except for that. Once she heard a dog bark on a distant farm and old Napoleon rouse from his slumber at the back of the house and answer, and then the world was silent again. The moon was out, and through the skylight she could see its pale light silvering the crown of the tree in the yard. Once or twice she felt herself drifting off into the heaviness of sleep and stirred to hold it away.

She didn't want to sleep. For weeks her imagination had been creating terrible visions of David being killed, of herself fleeing through the dark; it was just possible that those visions were destined to become reality at the McIvers'. And if so, this was to be her last visit into the past; she would never sleep through the night with him again. And she was reluctant to let go of consciousness, to say goodbye to this darkened room, the silvered tree, the quiet night under the nineteenth-century moon.

She looked at him lying beside her, a dim sleeping form in the moonlight, saying to him in her mind: I love you, David; I don't want us to part, I want to stay with you forever, until we both die of our natural and fulfilled old age. And there has to be a way to make that possible. I was wrong to send the note, but there has to be another way, and I will find it.

19

IT WAS A WARM and sunny afternoon. The long lawn stretched from the rear of the Hartley house down to the small dock at the edge of the lake. Jennie sat on the large rug laid out on the grass, cradling a glass of white wine in her lap. A white cloth on the rug held the remains of Elizabeth's picnic: long loaves of bread, plates of boiled eggs, cheese, several varieties of meat. Empty wine bottles beside a bowl of fruit created a luminous green glow in the center of the cloth. Out on the lawn, Elizabeth was playing croquet with three young men and another girl, the white of their clothes—duck trousers and long lacy dresses—making a sun-dazzled pattern against the grass. One of the men was trying to knock Elizabeth's ball from the course. Laughing, she had placed her foot on it, shielding it beneath her dress. Jennie watched them, envious, too aware of the coming rendezvous tonight to relax and enjoy herself.

David reclined on one elbow at the other end of the rug, talking with Jamie Willis. Tall, with a reddish moustache, Willis was stretched out on the grass, long legs crossed at the ankles. He was eating grapes from a bunch, watching the croquet game. He removed the stem from a grape and popped it into his mouth.

"So you spent a year in Paris, David."

"Partly in Paris. I spent some time in Amsterdam and the South of France."

"Admirable, admirable. Your *Wanderjahr*, so to speak. I made the Grand Tour myself, you know, though I must say I preferred Venice and Rome to Paris. But it was a profitable experience. Did you have an interesting crossing?"

"You might say that. I went by cattle-boat."

"A novel mode of travel. I shall have to try it some day. And what are your plans now?"

"I'm not really sure. I may go back to Europe."

"You should come to New York. I could introduce you to some very important people. I move in different circles now, you know, since we saw each other last. I daresay I could be quite a help to you."

David smiled. "At the moment, the one thing I'm concerned with is putting paint to canvas. I doubt you could help me there, Willis."

"Oh, but David, you'll have to learn there's more to this than talent. Knowing the right people can be important."

Jennie decided she didn't like Jamie Willis. She looked away, across the lawn to where another young man was lounging in a hammock, tuning the strings of a mandolin. His girlfriend leaned against the tree at the head of the hammock, playfully dropping petals from a flower on his face. Jennie felt the stirrings of envy again. She got up from the rug and went down the length of lawn to the small dock jutting out over the water.

A faint breeze rustled the leaves of a weeping willow leaning out from the bank beside the dock. The lake stretched away blue and cool far up toward the town, and just out from the shore two swans circled silently under the umbrella of the tree, in deep shade. How she wished she could really be a part of this, without the thought of David's death, and the need to find some way to avert it, constantly filling her mind. He had said the rendezvous tonight was only to make arrangements, but there was no guarantee that Hubbard would not discover them with Rachel, that what she feared would not happen tonight. And even if it didn't, how would she be able to manipulate the arrangements to ensure that it did not happen later?

She heard footsteps behind her and turned to see Elizabeth approaching along the dock, carrying a chunk of bread for the swans.

"It's a lovely view, isn't it?" Elizabeth said.

"Yes, I've never seen the lake from here before." She was sure her arriving with David had made their relationship obvious; Elizabeth had been cool toward her all afternoon.

"I hope you're having a good time," Elizabeth said. She tossed a bit of bread out onto the water and watched the swans converge on the spot where it fell. "I saw you talking with Edward earlier. He's quite an admirer of yours, you know."

"That's very kind of him."

Elizabeth examined her face. "That's a lovely pendant. Was it a gift?"

Jennie fondled the pendant on the chain around her neck—the butterfly Michael had given her, with its multi-colored enameled wings set in a filigree of gold. She knew the implication behind Elizabeth's question—that it was a gift from David—and wished it was true, that her life was as simple as Elizabeth thought. No one could know the torment she was in—her anxiety about David, or the guilt that had led her to promise Michael she would always wear the pendant with the dress, to do at least this one small thing for him. "Yes," she said, "it was a gift."

A leaf from the tree drifted down onto the water. A swan coasted sedately over to the spot, ducked an exploratory beak, moved away. "The season's nearly over," Elizabeth said. "I suppose David will be sorry to see you return to New York. Have you known him long?"

"Not long."

"It's a shame he's stayed in Chesapequa. He's wasting himself here. He should be in New York, or Paris, where he could meet the kind of people essential to his success." She arched an eyebrow at Jennie. "Am I right in thinking it's you who's holding him here?"

"I think David makes his own decisions."

"Perhaps." Elizabeth tossed another bit of bread out to the swans. "Why don't you go away with him?"

Jennie didn't answer; she was sorry now she had come down here, where Elizabeth could get her alone.

"You're married, aren't you?" Elizabeth said.

Jennie flushed.

"Ah, I thought so." Elizabeth smiled triumphantly. "This is not a resort frequented by unattached young women. There have already been rumors, you know, speculation about you. To be quite frank, there is something of a scandal brewing. Jamie tells me Pamela's father is very displeased with David for taking up with someone else so soon. The scandal will force him to leave, you know. And when he leaves, I'll go with him."

"*You'll* go with him?"

"Yes." Elizabeth seemed very self-confident. "David and I were in love long before he met Pamela. Now she's gone, we'll be together again. Maybe you think he loves you, but I assure you you're wrong. You're only a summer fling, because you resemble Pamela. You didn't know that, did you? You're not the first married woman to have this experience in a summer resort. I've seen it happen here before—when the season ends, the romance is over."

With difficulty, Jennie controlled her anger. "This time you could be wrong."

"Oh, no. I'll wager your husband is a banker or something else of that sort. You'll never leave that security to live in an artist's flat. I know your kind. You'll enjoy your little romance while you're here, and when the season's over you'll go back to your husband. You're too proper. I'd never let propriety stand in my way."

"Perhaps you don't know me as well as you think you do."

"Oh, you mustn't think me unfriendly. In a way I admire you—you manage to have the best of both worlds. There's no reason we can't be friends. Perhaps I'll call on you at the hotel soon. The Hudson, wasn't it?"

And with that, she turned and went back up the lawn toward the others, leaving Jennie angry and anxious. She wanted to believe that Elizabeth, confident of her eventual victory, really did feel a sort of perverse sistership between them; but those final words, the implicit threat of revealing to Jennie's supposed husband her relationship with David, gave the lie to that. Perhaps I'll call on you at the hotel soon. A sentence even more threatening than Elizabeth could have intended. If she did come to the hotel, she would discover that Jennie wasn't even registered there—and how could that be explained to David? Jennie started back toward the group, mustering an air of calm she did not feel. Elizabeth embodied now a fear she had long been trying to suppress—a fear that somehow something would make her tenuous existence in 1899 impossible before she could find some way to save David's life.

When darkness fell they left the party, which had moved indoors, and set out toward the McIver place. The buggy rocked gently through the soft and quiet darkness, the road a dull silver in the moonlight. There were no houses here, only the dark hedgerows and the sense of fields stretching away on either side. Jennie nestled against David's side, trying to tell herself that her fear was

all out of proportion to the danger they faced, but there was beyond the calculable danger some deeper fear, some mysterious sense that she was involved in something already foretold, that the events to come had already happened and would happen and could not be changed by her, and it left her feeling helplessly in the grip of history. But she could not allow herself to believe that, *would* not allow herself to believe that. They passed a farm, and a dog barked somewhere far up through the trees, near the lights of the house, and she started, wondering now whether the McIvers had a dog. But surely David would have thought of that. They crested a hill and started down in a gradual sweeping turn back toward the lake, and then she sensed the lake itself again, a vast black void off to the left, beyond the fields. Then they passed another house, closer to the road this time, light showing in windows beyond a wide veranda, the yard looking dark and mysterious under the moonlit trees.

When the house had receded out of sight behind them, David slowly brought the buggy to a halt.

"They're there," he said.

"That was it?"

"The McIver place. The Hubbard buggy was in the drive. They're there, but there's no telling what they're doing or if Rachel will have a chance to slip away."

She shivered with retroactive fear, wondering if someone had seen them from the windows.

"There's a lane here somewhere," David said, and clucked to the horse, starting the buggy forward at a slow walk. After a few yards they found the lane, leading away into the darkness; David backed the buggy in far enough to be invisible from the road and pulled it off into the ditch, beneath a tree.

He took her hand, and together they crossed the moon-silvered road and made their way along the dark hedgerow to the edge of the McIver yard. Overhead, the moon burned coldly through the frayed and yellowed edge of a cloud. Beyond two trees standing in pools of shadow from the moon she saw the vague outline of the Hubbard buggy in the drive, the moon-white porch front, the windows dim with oil-lamp light from inside. She was uneasily aware of Matthew Hubbard's presence, scant yards away, beyond those thin walls.

"Does she know where we will be?" she whispered.

"The note said she would try to slip out the back of the house, but nothing definite. There's a dock back at the edge of the lake. That would be a good place to wait."

The yard extended back along the side of the house, separated by another hedge from the field on the other side. Holding to David's hand, Jennie followed stealthily along the hedgerow till they reached the lake and worked their way along the water's edge to the small dock directly to the rear of the house. There was no one there. A small boat was snubbed up to a pillar of the dock; moonlight rippled on the black water. There were more trees in the back yard, casting eerie shadows and making it difficult to see through to the area around the back porch. David snapped open a pocket watch, tilting it in the moonlight to read the time.

"There's a boathouse farther along here," he said. "She could be there. Wait here while I look."

He was gone before she could protest, receding into the darkness. Alone now, she was more frightened than before. The vast sky arched overhead, a bed of stars and shredded clouds from horizon to horizon. The sounds of crickets rang in the night as if in a giant amphitheater. Against that constant sound, she heard the occasional croak of a frog in the reeds along the shore, the bump of the boat against the dock, the hoot of an owl somewhere off in the fields. The night, which with David near had seemed safely silent, now seemed filled with mysterious sounds, and she was newly aware of a dozen shadowy shapes about the yard, dense areas of darkness in which anyone could be hiding. She heard a sudden noise along the water's edge and turned, relieved to see David reappearing out of the dark.

"Nothing," he said. "I'd better signal. She may be out somewhere and uncertain where to look for us." He took a match from his waistcoat pocket and, before she could protest, raked it along the heel of his boot.

The striking of the match seemed very loud. The flame flared up, a sudden circle of light surrounding them. She saw the planks of the dock they were standing on, the edge of grass where it joined the bank, the eerily pale undersides of the tree branches nearby, but beyond the light the darkness seemed even more impenetrable than before. He lifted the match above his

head, and the circle of light seemed to leap out around them. She had to restrain an urge to snatch it out, fearing it would bring Hubbard upon them at any moment. Then it did go out, flickered briefly in a breeze and shrank down into itself and winked out, and she heard footsteps whispering quickly across the grass. For an instant she was still blind from the light, then her eyes adjusted to the dark again in time to see Rachel emerge out of the night, holding her skirts up with both hands, running cautiously from the direction of the house.

Rachel embraced David. "I was so worried. I couldn't see you anywhere."

"This is Mrs. Logan," David said. "She knows about everything." He smiled. "She wouldn't let me come alone. I think I've told her too many scary stories about your father."

"Oh, Papa scares everyone," Rachel said.

Jennie endured Rachel's quick examination and was relieved to see that she seemed to approve, that she sensed their relationship and was glad, for David's sake.

"I hope you don't mind my coming," Jennie said.

"I think it's a fine idea," Rachel said. "If David agreed to it, you must be having a good effect on him." Impulsively, she embraced him again. "I'm so happy to see you, David. It's been so long. I was hoping Charles would be here. When he came to the house, I thought perhaps—"

"He meant to come," David said. "It was all arranged, but he had to return to the Point." Quickly, he explained about the wire and his decision to keep the rendezvous in Charles' stead. "Your father's acquainted with his commander at the Point. Evidently he arranged to have the wire sent. Charles was very disappointed. He had arranged to get special leave when his letters began coming back unopened."

"Oh, that's Papa's doing, too. All the post is put on Papa's desk when it arrives, and Ames says there have been letters from Charles. But I never saw them, so I knew he was doing something with them. Oh, David, he's so changed since Pamela died. It's awful to watch. He's become so bitter."

"So I gathered."

"Did—did Charles leave a message? Something for me?"

"Yes," David said, "he did. He was planning tonight to ask you to elope."

"To elope?"

"I told him I'd get you away if you agreed and send you on the train. There's a couple you can stay with at the Point, but the idea is to be married immediately."

Rachel was suddenly subdued. In the unexpected silence, Jennie searched the surrounding darkness, straining to hear the faintest unusual sound. If Hubbard were to discover them, this would be the likeliest time, with Rachel missing from the house.

"David, what should I do?" Rachel said. "How can I do that to Papa, running away?"

"You have to leave him some day. And he'll never agree to let you go, you know that."

"But to decide now, without even—oh, if I could only talk to Charles."

"There may not be much time. Charles mentioned something about a threat to send you to Virginia."

"Yes, Papa did threaten that, the last time he found out I'd seen Charles. If he found out about this—"

"If he finds out about this, it may be too late. You've been a good daughter to him, Rachel. Now you have to think about yourself. He has Mrs. Trapp to look after him. The only way you'll ever be free is to run away, you know that. And there's no reason I can see to wait for another time."

"Yes," Rachel said, "you're right. It's the only thing." She smiled now, as if following the relief at having made the decision came eagerness to put it into effect. "And I know just when we can do it. Papa said we'll be going out again Thursday evening. That's the day after tomorrow. I'll need only a day to get my things together. Oh, David, you were right, it is the right thing to do, I can feel it."

"Hush," David said. "Where is he taking you, did he say?"

"No, he's become very secretive. I'm sure now this is the reason. He fears just such a plot as this one. I won't know till Thursday evening. And I'll have a valise, too. That will have to be gotten away from the house."

"That shouldn't be a problem. If you can send Ames out to the gate with the valise, I'll meet her there just after sunset. She can tell me where you'll be. I can take the valise with me."

"Oh, no, David, that's much too dangerous. Papa's full of hatred for you. If he discovered you anywhere near the house, there's no telling what he might do."

"There's no other way."

"There is another way," Jennie said. "I can do it."

"Jennie," David said.

"It's too dangerous for you, David. It wouldn't be dangerous for me. Rachel's father saw me only once, in the dark. He wouldn't recognize me."

"Jennie, you can't expect me—"

"It's the only way that makes sense, David. I can drive there in a cab. If I'm discovered talking with Ames, I can say I've just arrived in town to visit friends and I've come to the wrong address by mistake. That way no one would suspect anything."

"Mrs. Logan is right, David," Rachel said. "It's the perfect solution."

"It's no solution at all," David said. "I'll have to learn where you'll be going, how and when you plan to slip away, where to meet you. There are too many things to arrange still."

"I can give all that to Ames in a message for Mrs. Logan. There's no need for you to be there."

"And besides," Jennie said, "you remember Willis suggested you have dinner together before he goes back to New York? You can have dinner with him Thursday night, while I'm meeting Ames. It's the perfect alibi if you're suspected later of helping Rachel elope."

"It's much too dangerous," David said.

"That's just the point," Rachel said, "Mrs. Logan is right. It's not dangerous for her at all, but it's much too dangerous for you, given the way Papa feels. I couldn't live with myself if something happened to you on my account."

"You *must* let me go, David," Jennie said.

"Wait," David said. "Did you hear that?"

Now Jennie heard it too—someone moving along the porch at the rear of the house. She strained to see, but the moon had gone behind a cloud. She heard footsteps coming at a run across the yard and, panicked, clutched at David's arm.

"Wait," Rachel said. "It's Emily. She's been standing watch on the porch."

The other girl paused at the edge of vision, a ghostly figure in the dark. "Come quickly, Rachel, your father's asking for you. He wants you to play some pieces for the company."

"Stall him," Rachel said. "Tell him I've gone for a walk along the lake. I'll be there in a moment."

"You'd better go now, Rachel," David said.

"Only if you promise me not to come Thursday night."

"How can I agree to that?"

"David, think of me. How do you think I would feel if Papa did something to you? If my father, whom I love, committed violence on a man I also love, all on my account? Please, David, don't make me responsible for something like that."

For a moment, David was silent. Then he said, "Very well, Rachel. If it's important to you."

"Will you give me your word? You won't change your mind?"

"You have my word."

She embraced him again. "Thank you, David. I know there won't be time to say much Thursday evening—but we'll see each other again, after everything's over." She took Jennie's hand in both of hers. "I'm sorry to have met you under these circumstances, Mrs. Logan. I'm very grateful to you for agreeing to help. I'll tell Ames to wait just inside the gate. David will tell you where." And with that, she was gone, dress rustling, disappearing back into the darkness toward the house.

They waited until they heard the door close. Then, hand in hand, they made their way back along the water's edge and up the hedgerow beside the house. In the dark, every footfall seemed very loud. Jennie clung to David's hand, watching the lamp-lit rooms through the windows. She could not relinquish the fear that Hubbard might burst out of the dark at them at any moment, that any one of these footsteps might be the sound which started the entire sequence of events she was to hear from Mrs. Bates almost three-quarters of a century into the future.

The fear did not leave her even when they reached the buggy. The moon had come out again, turning the road to silver, and the sky was again a scattering of stars. The quiet sound of the horse's hooves carrying her away

from that house, the comforting sense of David awkwardly holding the reins while he lit his pipe beside her, the giant silence of the surrounding night—none of that could ease her anxiety. She had found the opening she had sought; she had made it possible to intervene and determine the course of the events to come. And it was just that fact which frightened her now. The time was at hand. The burden of saving David's life was now entirely hers.

He placed a hand on hers. "It's past eight o'clock. You did say he'd be arriving on the eight o'clock train?"

"Yes," she said, thinking how even he never used the phrase "your husband"; it was as if that imaginary man at the Henry Hudson were as mythical to him as he was to her. "You'll have to leave me off somewhere away from the hotel. You know I'd rather spend the night with you than anything else. But I won't be free again until Thursday."

"It doesn't matter. After this is over, we'll go away. We'll go to France. I have friends there, I can work there. We can start a whole new life together."

Subtly, she turned her hand so that her palm slipped into his and held there, tightening. She thought of the sunswept beaches of Deauville and Trouville, the line of blue ocean and the boardwalk and the blurred forms of bathers as she had seen them in so many Impressionist paintings—by Boudin, and Monet, and Pissarro—and she tried to stifle the dream that all that could be real for her; tried not to see herself on that boardwalk, the wind off the sea whipping at her dress and sending the thin clouds racing across the blue of the sky; tried to avoid the image of herself breakfasting with David on a sunlit terrace overlooking a stretch of beach, in a seaside hotel; tried not to see David happy and suntanned, working at his easel on the beach while she unpacked a wicker basket of food and wine on a blanket a few steps away. No good could come of dwelling on these lovingly imagined scenes; they brought, after the longing, only pain, because she was afraid—despite her hope and determination—that they would never come true.

The buggy crested a small hill and started down toward the lights of town, and every inch of road seemed to be taking her closer to disaster. Her time was running out; Thursday evening was only forty-eight hours away. If she failed then in her attempt to alter the past, David's life would end. And so would

hers. She would not be able to go on living in her own time, knowing he had been murdered in his.

20

THE NEXT MORNING she felt a captive in her own century, imprisoned and helpless, while events advanced unhindered beyond that barrier of time. The day was uncomfortably warm, humid air trapped beneath dull gray clouds. The house, with Michael gone to work, seemed unnaturally silent. All morning she had paced the house as if it were a cage; now she stood at the living-room windows, staring out at the motionless trees along the road, the leaden lake reflecting the ominous gloom of the sky.

There was nothing she could do but think. The elopement was set for tomorrow night. Tomorrow night, in 1899—that was the night David was killed, she was sure of it. Something must have gone wrong. Hubbard must have discovered Rachel missing too soon. He must have seen her in David's buggy, or he was told at the station that David had driven her to the train, or —somehow, sometime—he must have overheard the plans for the elopement. She lay down on the couch in front of the windows, propped a pillow behind her head. If only she had some way of discovering what really happened. For an instant, she paused, one hand still on the pillow. Then she rose from the couch, quickly gathered up her purse and car keys, and left the house.

The *Chesapequa Star-News* was housed in a large one-story brick building at the corner of Wade Street. Inside was the clattering of typewriters, a hubbub of voices, the rhythmic rumbling of the presses somewhere in the back.

She sought out the editor and asked if she could look up an old story in the paper's morgue. "I don't want to take it out, just to read it here."

"If it's older than 1928," he said, "I'm afraid you're out of luck. A big fire in 1927 took everything there was—files, presses, the works."

Slowly, she assimilated that information. “Is there someone here who could tell me something about a story that happened before 1928?”

“How long before?”

“In 1899.”

He grinned and regretfully shook his head. “We got some old moss-backed reporters here, but nobody that goes back that far. Why don’t you try Mrs. Bates at the historical society? She’s closed today, Wednesdays, but she wouldn’t mind you stopping by the house. Nothing Mrs. Bates likes better than talking about old stories.” A phone rang somewhere in the back. “Excuse me,” he said, and retreated through the assemblage of desks.

Jennie went back out to the car, sat for a moment in its stuffy heat. She knew where Mrs. Bates lived, but would going there do any good? Mrs. Bates had said she knew nothing more about the story. But why not? She started the car and backed out of the parking place. There was nowhere else to turn. She would force Mrs. Bates to let her talk with her aunt, senile or not.

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But Mrs. Bates balked at the idea.

“I really don’t think I should,” she said. “She’s not at all well. The doctor says she hasn’t much longer.”

They were drinking tea in the living room of Mrs. Bates’ house, an old two-story Tudor on a landscaped corner. The room was filled with antiques.

“I certainly don’t want to disturb her,” Jennie said, “but this story has really become very important to me.” It had taken her twenty minutes of idle visiting to bring the subject up at all; she was not going to give up now.

“Well, as I told you, dear, I’m sure I know as much about it as Aunt Betty. It was my favorite story as a child.”

“But mightn’t she remember more about it now? Old people sometimes do, you know. The past comes back to them when they get old. My friend practically promised to publish the story if I can learn more about it. I’ve told her all about Chesapequa, and she says we might do a whole series of articles about its past.”

“Oh, really?” Mrs. Bates seemed to brighten. “That certainly would be nice.”

"Couldn't I just meet her? I do owe my interest in Chesapequa to you, and it would mean so much to me to meet your aunt, who started your own interest in it. It's so rare to meet a real link to the past."

Mrs. Bates smiled, flattered. "Well, perhaps it would be all right. Yes, I suppose it might even be good for her, to meet a young woman like yourself who shares her interests. I'll have to warn you, though—Nurse Jenkins will object very strongly. But never you mind. The poor woman can't accept that she's a paid servant. I always have to assert my will with her on the subject of Aunt Betty."

They started up a flight of carpeted stairs; a metal track fixed to the wall and carrying a small chair ran up the length of the stairwell.

"I had that put in when Aunt Betty first got down," Mrs. Bates said. "I'm afraid she didn't get much benefit from it. She's been bedridden practically ever since." She paused outside the closed door of an upstairs bedroom. "Now don't be disappointed if it turns out she's not able to remember anything. Some days she's just incoherent, I'm afraid. Gets confused about what year it is, and who she's talking to—you know how old people are." She knocked gently and opened the door.

A screen had been placed across the room, creating a small anteroom just inside the door. In it was a daybed, a small table and some chairs. A nurse reading a book in a chair looked up as they entered.

"Nurse Jenkins," Mrs. Bates said, "this is Mrs. Logan, a young friend of mine. She's very interested in Chesapequan history. I've been telling her some of the stories Aunt Betty used to tell me, and I promised to introduce her to Auntie. Is she awake?"

The nurse closed the book and got up from the chair. "I doubt she's in any condition to discuss the past or anything else today. Even if she were, I would emphatically not recommend bringing a stranger in to upset her routine."

"Nurse Jenkins, we've been over this before. Aunt Betty's life was never routine, and I'm sure if there is anything she would not want at this point it's a routine that consists of lying alone in an empty room."

"I'm sorry you force me to be so frank," the nurse said, "but we both know your aunt hasn't long to live. She's a dying woman, Mrs. Bates, and I would think she should be left alone."

Mrs. Bates bristled. “If I had wanted Auntie to spend her last days alone, I could well afford a private room in a hospital. I brought her home here, and hired your assistance, precisely because I think it barbaric to allow one’s loved ones to die alone in the cold and unfamiliar room of a hospital. When my time comes, I dearly hope my room is filled with friends—yes, and interesting strangers—right up until I draw my last breath. Now if you will please step aside.”

“I can’t accept responsibility for this,” the nurse said.

“That’s perfectly all right. The responsibility is mine in any case.”

Subdued because of the trouble she was causing but holding fiercely to her knowledge that it was necessary, Jennie followed Mrs. Bates into the main room on the other side of the screen. The room was dimly lit, the shutters half drawn. The old woman lay in a tall hospital bed, with a crank at the foot to raise and lower the mattress. She looked very old, with a pale haggard face and stringy white hair. Her eyes were closed. She seemed not to hear them come in.

Mrs. Bates seated herself in a chair beside the bed. “Aunt Betty? Auntie, dear? I’ve brought you a visitor.”

Standing at the foot of the bed, Jennie watched the old woman’s eyes open and turn to Mrs. Bates. She was tremblingly aware of being in the presence of the one person who might be able to tell her what really happened, and how. She thought she saw a faint smile flicker across the withered lips. One of the liver-spotted hands moved ever so slightly on the coverlet.

Mrs. Bates took it in both of hers. “Auntie, dear, this is Mrs. Logan. I’ve been telling her about you, and she so wanted to meet you. She’s interested in Chesapequan history, too, Auntie.”

The eyes turned and focused on Jennie. They were large and feverish, deeply set in the haggard face.

Jennie moved closer to the bed. “I’m very pleased to meet you,” she said. “I’ve wanted so much to talk to you.”

“Mrs. Logan is interested in the Reynolds story, Auntie. You remember the story about David Reynolds—how his wife was killed and he claimed he saw her ghost come back? And then he was murdered and nobody ever found out who did it?”

“I really can’t allow this,” the nurse said.

"Can you hear me, Auntie?"

Jennie saw the old woman's lips move, tremble, as if she were trying to speak. The large, feverish eyes were still focused on her own. She felt a stir of hope, as if the eyes burning out of that wrinkled, emaciated face were trying to communicate with her, and she leaned down across the foot of the bed. "Please try to remember. The David Reynolds story? Do you remember that story?"

The old woman's eyes glazed over. "I'm sorry," she murmured, and turned her head away and began to cry, two large tears beginning a slow descent down her face.

As if recognizing a signal, the nurse stepped quickly to the bedside, ran a hand beneath the blankets. "I'm afraid you'll have to leave. I warned you not to bother her. This happens when she's upset. She's lost control of her bladder again."

"Not again," the old woman cried, her head still turned away, "not again."

Ashamed now to have invaded the privacy of this dying old woman, Jennie meekly followed Mrs. Bates back down the stairs. Somehow now she felt this had been inevitable, that she was meant to learn nothing more, to act on faith alone.

In the living room, Mrs. Bates poured out more tea, as much, it seemed, to cover her embarrassment as anything else.

"I'm really very sorry," Jennie said. "I shouldn't have insisted. I really didn't want to upset her."

"Nonsense," Mrs. Bates said. "It's not your fault at all. You couldn't have known. Some days she's right as rain, perfectly lucid. Then, other days—well, you see how she is sometimes. I'm sure she would have loved talking with you. I won't have Nurse Jenkins closing her off while she can still enjoy things. You come back another day, one of her good days, and we'll get her to talk about the Reynolds story. I'm sure she'd enjoy it very much."

Jennie accepted some sugar for her tea. She had no hope left, but she would not leave without one more try. "Are you sure you've told me everything you remember? Maybe if you told me the story again, you would remember something else."

Mrs. Bates shook her head. "I'm sure I've told you everything I know."

"Could you just tell me the part again about how he was murdered? Please? It's important."

"Well, dear, no one knows how he was murdered. That's the point. There was a band concert by the lake that night, and some of the concert-goers heard the shot and found him just after it happened, but they never found the murderer. As I say, some thought it was his father-in-law, some thought it was the woman he'd taken up with, because she was seen leaving the scene of the crime. She disappeared then, you see, and was never seen or heard from again."

Through two more cups of tea, Jennie coaxed Mrs. Bates into telling the story again, pressing her with questions, probing for un-remembered facts. But after an hour, she finally gave it up. It was clear she was going to learn nothing more. She left clinging to that one additional bit of information: a band concert, she had to beware of a band concert.

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That night she lay in bed in her attic room, with a glass of milk and a book she had got from the library during her last visit with Dr. Salzman. The milk was for her stomach; her anxiety had it in knots. She was acutely aware that David was probably in this room right now, in his own time. She would need only to put on the dress to go to him. How she wished she could. It might be his last night alive. If she failed tomorrow night she would have killed him as surely as if she really had been the one who pulled the trigger.

She heard Michael climbing the stairs to the second-floor bedroom. The poor man—his life had become so lonely. She almost wished he would get angry again, break through that exaggerated caution with which he treated her, so she would have an excuse to bring it all out in the open, this secret life she carried around inside her like a growing tumor. She longed to ask his advice, seek his help, anything to alleviate the awful loneliness she felt when she thought of what she might not be able to prevent, less than twenty-four hours from now.

21

MICHAEL CLIMBED PAST the second-floor hallway and mounted the stairs to the attic. The door to the studio was closed, a crack of light showing above the sill. He knocked, twice, and entered. Jennie was lying in a filmy nightgown on the bed, drinking a glass of milk, a book open on her lap.

He took the chair beside the bed, feeling vaguely sheepish. "I get lonely down there," he said. "I miss you."

She reached out to take his hand. "I'm sorry. I know I'm a burden to you. I try not to be."

"You're not a burden to me. I just worry about you."

"Please don't worry about me, Michael. I'll be all right, no matter what happens."

That sounded ominous. He thought of that elusive man, his imaginary rival, and felt resentment rising. She leaned up to put the glass on the bedside table, and he saw the round curve of her hip, the long sweep of her thigh, the soft liquid jostle of her breasts beneath the cloth, and the thought of her giving that body to another man, even in fantasy, sent a flare of jealous anger burning through him like flames through a flue.

"What are you reading?"

"A book I got from the library." She showed him the title: *Other Times, Other Worlds.*

"Do you think you should be reading something like that?"

"I'm trying to understand what's happening to me, Michael."

"I thought you had Dr. Salzman for that."

"Dr. Salzman is trying to help me the best he knows how."

He could tell from her tone how little confidence she had in Salzman's help. It depressed him to realize he loved her more now than he ever had, made him angry that he was the way he was, so that under the illusion of competing for her with another man, even an imaginary one, he could feel more loving toward her than he had when it might have done some good, might have prevented this from happening.

"Have you learned anything from the book?" he said.

"I thought there might be something about time-travel, about whether you could go back and change history. But there's nothing like that."

"Tell me what's happening to you now, Jennie."

"You don't want me to tell you, Michael. It would only hurt you, and I don't want that."

"Tell me, and let me worry about the hurt. I have a right to know."

"You'd only say I'm going crazy, you and Dr. Salzman both. Believe me, Michael, I wish I could tell you, I wish I could tell you everything, because I'm afraid and I need somebody to talk to. But you would never believe me."

"You still think it's all really happening, don't you?" Anger seeped into him again. "You think he's real, and you think you're in love with him, and that's why you're afraid to tell me, isn't it?"

"Don't use that tone of voice, Michael. If we're going to talk about this, you have to try to understand, you have to try to believe."

"How *can* I believe? How can you believe anything so ridiculous?"

"Because it's *happening* to me. It's been happening to me for a long time. I go back for days now, Michael. I'm part of his life. I don't care what you think, or what Dr. Salzman thinks, it's real. It's real, and I have to deal with it."

"Jennie, how can it be real?" He was dimly aware that he was entering areas Dr. Salzman had warned him against, but his frustration would not let him stop. "Can't you see how crazy that is?"

"I don't know how it can be real, Michael, but it is. It's happening to me, and whatever's coming is going to happen to me, too, and if you want to help me you'll try to understand. You wanted to know, Michael, you wanted to know, so I'll tell you. Yes, I'm in love with him, and he's in love with me. He wants me to go away with him. But I can't, Michael, because he's going to die unless I find some way to stop it. I've gone back, Michael, and I've seen it start

and I can see it coming. There's this girl, his sister-in-law, Rachel, that he's going to help elope, and unless I find some way to stop it her father is going to kill him, just like Mrs. Bates said."

"Jennie, Jennie, I can't believe any of this. Can't you see that all this is fantasy, that you can't go back to 1899 or wherever it is? That's not possible, Jennie."

"It's possible, Michael, because I've been there. The man I love is there. I'm sorry, but you wanted to know. I can't help being in love with him. And he wants me to stay there with him, in 1899, he wants me to go away with him. And if I can find some way to do it, I will. I don't want to live here anymore, in this time. I feel warmed there, Michael, by everything—him, and the way the world was then, and the kind of life I could have with him. There's no warmth in modern life, Michael. If I can't find some way to stay there with him, if I can't save his life, then I don't want to live either."

"Jennie, he doesn't exist. He's not real, Jennie. Please try to see that."

"But he is real, Michael. He's real in every sense of the word. I can see him as clearly as I can see you. The last time I saw him I was standing in the little park just before you get to the train station, not the station now but the way it was then, because you see I told him I live in town, in the Henry Hudson Hotel, and I always go back there so he'll think I told the truth. And this time he let me off at the park because I told him you were at the hotel, my husband was at the hotel, and I said let me off here so we won't be seen together. And when he let me off I watched him drive away, and when he got even with the train station, the station master came out and said something to him, and he stopped the buggy. He didn't know I was still watching, because it was so dark, but I heard them talking. And I heard him laugh about something, something the station master said, and he looked so young and alive—he was happy because he thinks everything is going to be over and we're going to go away together. But all I could think of was maybe that's where it happened, maybe right there where he's so happy now is where it's going to happen, because you see he's supposed to drive Rachel to the station, and I thought maybe that's where Rachel's father discovered them and that's where it happened. I found out today that it happened at a concert, at a band concert near the lake, but all I could think of then was maybe this is where it's going to happen. Because

you see, Michael, it hasn't happened yet, he's still alive, he's back there expecting me to leave you and go away with him. And what can I do, Michael? I have to do something. I can't let him die. I know this is all very strange, and very unfair to you. I never wanted to hurt you, Michael, but I didn't choose for this to happen. It was meant to happen, I know that now. Sometimes I feel I'm being tested, that something in my destiny depends on whether I can find a way to save him."

As he listened to her talk, watching the emotions flicker across her face, a strange and chilly feeling seemed to invade his mind, leaving it cold and frighteningly clear. She really believed it; she had surrendered totally and finally to it; she was beyond any reach of his persuasion. It was like watching her from a great distance, cold and objective, seeing her as she really was: a woman going insane, talking about the unbelievable with the fierce intensity of someone on the very edge of madness.

Something within his strange coldness warned him to be cautious, to humor her fantasy. "But even if everything you say is true, Jennie, you can't save him, you can't go away with him. According to Mrs. Bates' story, he's already dead. He was murdered in eighteen-ninety-nine."

"But couldn't he survive some way, Michael? It wouldn't matter that I didn't go away with him if only I knew he survived. Oh, Michael, if the past still exists and I can go to him there, couldn't other things be true, too? Do you remember what Beverly said about parallel worlds, Michael? She said there was a theory that people who die naturally, of old age, pass on to a higher level of existence, but people who die young pass on to a world just like this one, so they can fulfill the purpose of this incarnation. Couldn't that be true, Michael? Couldn't he live on like that even if I'm not able to save him?"

Her intensity frightened him, the strange talk of levels of existence and parallel worlds, ideas so alien to the person she was before this began. Gently, he said, "I love you, Jennie. I don't want you to go away from me."

"I know, Michael. I know you love me, and I'm sorry you have to go through this, too. I don't understand it, but if it was meant to happen to me, it must be meant to happen to you, too, don't you see?"

Trying gently, almost humorously, to convey affection, he said, "But how would I ever know what happened to you if you went away with him, if you

just disappeared and I never saw you again?"

But even this was a serious consideration to her. "I would find some way to tell you, Michael. I would find some way to get through and let you know. It's possible to break through the barriers of time and space. David did the night he broke the cupboard."

She talked on about the need to save David Reynolds' life, but he was no longer listening. He felt a great sadness wrench his heart; there was no doubt now that despite her ability to function day to day she was approaching genuine insanity. It was frightening to watch, but stronger still was his feeling of immense fatigue, a kind of hopeless acceptance that there was nothing he could do. But there was one thing that was absolutely imperative to do: to talk to Dr. Salzman. And that as soon as possible.

"You're going back to Fire Island tomorrow, aren't you?" he said.

"Yes, it's Beverly's vacation. I promised to spend some time with her."

"Do you think you ought to do that, feeling the way you do?"

"I promised, Michael." Her face was suddenly pale. "I'll only stay the day. I'll be home sometime tomorrow night."

For a moment he considered forbidding her to go, but even the implication of his question seemed threatening to her. Forbidding her would cause conflict, an argument, and he couldn't risk that now. It might endanger her mental state even more. And she would be with people there who were not involved in this, who didn't know about it, who would take her mind off it. It had worked out before; she had been going regularly without mishap. Possibly getting away from this house, this town, had kept her stable longer than if she hadn't gone. He would let her go this one last time, and then talk to Salzman tomorrow and decide what to do.

"I wish you had told me all this before," he said.

"I tried to tell you, Michael. You wouldn't believe me." She smiled gently, and even her smile had an intensity he had never seen before. "You don't believe me now, do you?"

"I don't know," he said, disconcerted by the quality of her smile. "Would you mind if I discussed this with Dr. Salzman?"

"No, Michael, I don't mind. Do what you have to do. I know I'm making you very unhappy, and I'm sorry. I've never been sorrier for anything in my

life. But I'm very grateful you came up here tonight. I wanted you to. I heard you on the stairs, and I wanted so much for you to come up here so I could talk with you, and you came. And I'm glad." She reached out to take his hand again. "I don't know how, but you've helped me very much. I'm afraid, Michael, I'm afraid because I don't know if I can do what I have to do. But I'm glad we've talked about it."

He felt an immense tenderness for her sweep over him, the kind of tenderness he knew she had always wanted him to feel; and before he could close it off, remembering all the times he had resisted this, wanting now finally to express those feelings in himself she had always wanted to see and he had never been able to show her, he leaned down to take her in his arms and hold her, feeling in a strange way a kind of peace, the peace of relinquishing resistance.

"I wish this didn't have to happen, Michael," she said. "I wish things could have been different between us."

"Won't you come downstairs? Come back down to the bedroom?"

"No, Michael. It's better this way. It's better not to rekindle what we had. Because you see, Michael, something doesn't want it to be. Something is calling me elsewhere, and I have no choice but to go."

"Jennie, don't talk like that."

She moved so that she could see his face, and again he was struck by the intensity of her look. "Maybe it's not a bad thing, Michael. Don't you see? Maybe it's true that I'm being tested. Maybe you're being tested, too, in the way you react to what's happening to me. And even though it's very frightening, maybe it's not a bad thing. Maybe it means there's more than we've always believed, that there are things about this life that we don't know, more than we can comprehend with just our minds."

"If I could believe that," he said, "all this might even be worth it."

He felt they were surrounded by an aura of tenderness that seemed to come not from her or from himself but from some awesome commingling of the two and, overcome with that tenderness, he took her in his arms again, not understanding what this was or why he should feel such strength in her strange air of unreality, but only surrendering to it for as long as it should last.

Tomorrow, he thought, tomorrow I can discuss all this with Dr. Salzman, and maybe then I'll understand.

It was a long time before he could bring himself to kiss her good-night and return down the stairs to the cold and lonely bedroom on the second floor.

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Dr. Salzman was surprised and shocked at the extent of what he had learned.

"She hasn't told me any of this," he said. "Once, she described a hallucination in which she'd talked to this man, but nothing with this complexity. And that was weeks ago. Since then, she's given me every reason to believe the hallucinations had stopped." He sighed, looking strained and tired in the shadowy light of the lamp. "It's hard for me to acknowledge what this means."

"You mean—she's been lying to you."

"I'm afraid so. And that's a very bad sign. I don't like all this talk of staying in the past, of going away with this man she calls David Reynolds, or of not wanting to live if he dies. Children sometimes invent imaginary playmates, you know; they give them names and seem to believe the playmate actually exists. And sometimes they announce the playmate is going to die, or has already died, and that's a healthy sign that the child is growing beyond that particular phase. But that is obviously not the case here. Jennie, or I should say her subconscious, has devised this other world as a means of escape; I don't want to alarm you, but this talk of returning to it permanently has very ominous implications. And I'm afraid this calls for more than just the weekly sessions in my office."

"You're suggesting—having her committed?"

"I'm recommending that she be hospitalized, if only to prevent her becoming a danger to herself. I think it's imperative she be some place where she can have twenty-four-hour observation, at least for the immediate future. If you agree, I'll set the process in motion. There'll be papers for you to sign, of course, and examinations by other doctors first, but I think it should be done as quickly as possible."

Michael tried to assimilate the enormity of this decision. "If you recommend it, of course I'll agree. It's just more than I can handle now. But what should I do in the meantime?"

"Try to arrange things so that Jennie is alone as little as possible. It would be best if you could take a leave of absence and be with her yourself, but if that's not possible, get someone to come and stay with her. Again, I don't want to alarm you, but the human mind is capable of willing itself to die. You've no doubt read of aborigines mysteriously wasting away and dying after a witch doctor has placed a curse on them. Well, I assure you, such things are feasible; they've been documented. I could explain it to you, go into Freud's theory of the death-instinct and so forth, but I'm sure that's not necessary. Just be gentle with her, and don't give her opportunity to be alone."

Outside, in the hot and oily air of the street, Michael watched the people striding past, aloof and oblivious in their normal workaday world. He couldn't go back to the office, not now, facing the necessity of telling Jennie, imagining the look in her eyes when she realized what he and Dr. Salzman were going to do. But there were still a few days before he would have to do that. Luckily, he had brought the car to the city today; he could drive to Bay Shore in an hour, could bring her home from Fire Island himself, so that she wouldn't have to take the train. It seemed very important not to waste any of the time they had left together before she would have to be told.

He hailed a cab to take him to where he had garaged the car.

22

THE LATE SUN CAST long shadows across the road. The buggy rocked gently along between twin rows of poplars, the horse going at a trot, flickering through sunlight and shadow. Jennie held her hat against the breeze, grateful for something to occupy her hands. She concentrated on the laboring rump and bobbing head of the horse, reluctant to look at David, stricken with the knowledge that his life depended on her actions within the next few hours.

They came to a crossroads and turned right, toward Chesapequa, between hedgerows she remembered from that first trip into the blacksmith's. She looked for and found the house beneath the clump of trees off away to the left, where she had seen the children playing on the swing, and then the stretch of road where they had passed the carriage drawn by those prancing big-footed horses, and the memory of that night came alive for her now because she was painfully aware that if she failed tonight she would never see any of this again.

"I still don't like it," David said. "I don't like it at all."

He had been trying ever since they left the house to talk her out of going alone; she was afraid now that he would not relent, would insist that he go with her or, worse, that he go in her place.

"David, you know what I'll say if I'm discovered. There's no reason anyone should disbelieve that." She longed to tell him the truth—that unless she had her way he was doomed tonight to die—but there was no way she could tell him how she knew.

"What if Hubbard overhears you talking to Ames?" he said.

"I'll be very, very careful to make sure that doesn't happen."

The road was widening here; they were approaching the outskirts of town. The hedgerows gave way to lawns on either side, huge trees shading houses set

back away from the road. They passed a boy coming from town, in kneepants and suspenders, pulling a little wagon in which sat a sack of feed and a pail of milk.

"I still don't like the thought of you anywhere near Matthew Hubbard."

"He won't know who I am even if he does see me. It's very simple—the valise is mine, I've come to the wrong place, I'm very sorry, goodbye. And I'll get back in the cab and leave."

He grinned momentarily, as if at the image of her dealing so brusquely with Matthew Hubbard. They angled through the elongated shade of the first tall buildings, then turned onto the wide expanse of Broad Street. It was the dinner hour; the streets were nearly deserted. Flags flew from the pillared porches of the Ben Franklin. A white van labeled CHESAPEQUA ICE went past in a clatter of hooves on cobbles. Jennie tried to etch each building on her mind, as if that would earn her the right to return here and remain.

David reined into the side street across from the Henry Hudson Hotel and brought the buggy to a halt at the curb. The sun had just set, leaving a luminous blue sky above the horizon. Across the street, a row of horse-cabs waited in a row along the side entrance of the hotel. He wound the reins around the whipstock, dismounted and came around to her side of the buggy.

"I should never have agreed to it," he said.

"You gave your word, David. You owe it to Rachel, and to me, to let me go alone."

"And I suppose there's nothing more I can say."

"No, there's nothing more you can say."

"You," he said with a grudging smile, "are a stubborn woman." He helped her down from the buggy, pressed into her hand some money for the cab. "Well, what cannot be cured must be endured. But be very careful."

"Promise me you won't worry."

"That I can't promise you. Let me get you a cab."

"No, I'll get my own." She pulled him down into a quick kiss. "Now go. Willis will be waiting for you."

And without looking back, she crossed the street to the row of waiting cabs.

She selected a driver, a beefy broad-built man in a plug hat, and directed him out of town, toward the Hubbard place. The road wound along a deep

cutbank through rolling hills. The sky still glowed with the aftermath of the sun, but the blue haze of evening already tinged the hillsides, and there was a touch of chill in the air. Wisps of strong-smelling smoke drifted back from the driver's stub of a cigar; with his unshaven face and plug hat he had a faintly sinister look—but that was why she had chosen him.

When they were well out of town, she tapped on the back of his seat and asked his name.

He glanced over his shoulder, the cigar in his teeth. "O'Donnelly, Ma'am. Arthur O'Donnelly."

"Mr. O'Donnelly, I wonder if you would do something for me. Something I would pay you for."

"Depends," he said, and flicked the ash from the cigar. "Depends on how much you're paying and what the job is."

"It's very simple, Mr. O'Donnelly. I want you to transport a young woman to the train station some time tonight. There's nothing dangerous about it, but it has to be done secretly and quickly." Surely, she thought, Hubbard would not harm a simple hireling like O'Donnelly.

He eyed her over his shoulder. "Not yourself, I trust."

"No, not myself. I'll tell you more later, if you agree."

"I'd come nearer agreeing if you'd explain why it has to be so secret and quick." He grinned around the cigar. "Since you did say there wasn't nothing dangerous about it."

"It has to be done secretly and quickly, Mr. O'Donnelly, because someone doesn't want her to leave. More than that I don't think you need to know."

He grinned again. "Generally, I like to know the particulars of anything I'm engaged in. But then you get what you pays for, don't you? How much did you have in mind?"

She hesitated. She still had nearly half the money from the pawned jewelry, but she would need some of that to give to Rachel. And she had no real idea of the value of money in this time, how much would be appropriate for something like this. "I thought twenty dollars."

"Ah, now, twenty dollars. It's a bit on the scant side, wouldn't you say? To be sure, you're claiming there's no danger involved, but with all that secrecy and haste . . . I'd say it'd take a wee bit more, don't you know?"

She allowed him to talk her up to forty dollars. It was surely too much; possibly even her first offer had been too much, betraying her ignorance and leading him to believe he could ask an unreasonable price. But it didn't matter. If her plan failed, money was the last thing she would regret losing.

Twilight was setting in when they reached the Hubbard place. She directed O'Donnelly a short distance past the drive and asked him to wait for her. Then she walked back to the two stone gateposts in the hedge fronting the road, slipped through the gate and into the trees to the left of the drive, where Rachel had said her maid would be waiting.

No one was there. The house stood a hundred yards up the sloping drive, light already showing in the windows. To her left, beyond the brush of a dismantled fencerow, was the edge of an apple orchard, stretching away into the shadows. From the gate on her right the roadside hedge ran behind her to join the fencerow at a right angle, creating a small corner in which she had the uneasy feeling of being trapped. A shed of some sort stood halfway between her and the house. She hugged the trunk of a tree, scanning the area, but could see no one on either side of the drive.

Had something gone wrong? Suddenly she was frightened, for the first time realizing one alarming possibility: If her intervention into the events of this time was succeeding, nothing she had learned from Mrs. Bates held true anymore. She had put herself in David's place. Was she drawing on herself the danger meant for him? And was that why she was here? To save his life, did she have to sacrifice her own? She could see no one from her hiding place, but Hubbard could be lurking behind any tree.

Then, from off to the left, she heard footsteps approaching through the apple orchard. Not the maid; they sounded like the slow, careful footsteps of a man. She felt a chill pass across the roots of her hair. Holding to the trunk, she slowly circled the tree till it was between her and the orchard. The footsteps stopped. Came toward her again. Stopped again. There was no sign of movement; whoever it was was in the orchard, out of sight beyond the brush of the dismantled fencerow. Watching her?

Leaving the shelter of the tree was the last thing she wanted to do, but she had to investigate before Ames arrived; she could not risk the maid's blurting out something incriminating before she could be warned. She scanned the area

along the drive one last time. Then, trying to look innocent and unconcerned, she moved through the dusk from tree to tree until she reached the brush of the fencerow.

It seemed darker here. She paused behind a clump of brush, listening; surely her approach should have caused whoever it was to react, to show himself, but there was nothing. That frightened her even more—the silence, and the uncertainty, the sense of unknown eyes observing her from hiding. It was better to move than to be caught, better to act through her fear than to wait helplessly within it. She stepped through an opening in the brushrow, into the dim shadowy expanse of the orchard.

She could see nothing. Row on row of trees receded in ordered ranks into the twilight; the brushrow stretched away on either side, seeming to hug the ground and creating along its flanks an area of darkness large enough to hide a man. Nothing moved in the dimness. Then she started, recoiled, hearing the footsteps directly ahead of her.

It was a deer. Twenty yards into the orchard, the deer stepped out from behind a tree and paced sedately across to another row, head erect, slim and delicate in the fading light. It was the same sound, the same slow careful steps, like those of a man. She watched it reach up to wrench an apple from an overhanging branch, a length of leafy twig revolving in its jaws as it chewed. She moved, and the deer saw her. It froze, white tail up like a flag, then crouched and gathered and bounded away, long light leaps that carried it into the tall brush on the other side of the orchard. She breathed again and made her way back to the tree at the edge of the drive.

Still no sign of the maid. Had Hubbard discovered Ames trying to sneak out of the house? She had a sudden vision of Hubbard confronting the maid with the valise, ferreting out the information that she was here, under the trees, waiting. From the orchard came the slow approach of footsteps again. Another deer?

Then she caught sight of something beyond the far side of the drive, something small and low to the ground, bobbing along the inner edge of the hedgerow toward her. The bobbing form began to rise, became the head, shoulders, figure of a girl in the cap and apron of a maid, ascending the slope of ground along the hedgerow as if she had worked her way around from the

back of the house. She stopped at the drive, darted a glance toward the house, then hurried across to the tree where Jennie waited.

She was young, pretty, and out of breath. "I was afraid you'd gone. I couldn't get away until Mr. Hubbard left the house."

"He's left the house?"

"He went to hitch up the carriage. We haven't much time. They're to leave for the McIvers' very soon."

"Where's the valise? You were supposed to bring Rachel's valise."

"I hid it in the gardener's toolshed up there, after dark last night. I meant to retrieve it, but—" she flushed "—I was afraid."

"Never mind. We'll retrieve it together. You know what to say if we're seen. If that happens before we get the valise, it'll just have to be left." She moved up out of the trees, keeping the shed between them and the lights of the house. "So they're going to the McIvers' again."

"Just to pick up Miss Emily. Then they're going to the band concert by the lake. The concert starts at nine and lasts till ten-thirty. I'm to tell you Mr. Reynolds should have the buggy waiting at the rear of the bandshell—that's on Elder Street, he'll know where it is. At nine-forty-five, Miss Rachel will pretend to be ill. Miss Emily will assist her toward the Ladies' Room in the building behind the bandshell, then she'll slip away to the buggy. Miss Rachel says they should make the nine-fifty-seven train just before it pulls out, so she'll be away and gone before her father even knows she's missing."

Jennie felt gooseflesh prickle her arms. Here, in simple words, was the plan that without her intervention would have led to David's murder this very night. The detail about the band concert confirmed it.

They had reached the shed. Jennie stood watch while Ames unlatched the door and slipped inside. The house seemed very near from here, massive and dark; she could even see details of the rooms through the windows. A woman descended a wide staircase and passed beyond one of the windows; Jennie shrank back, anxious and impatient: Ames seemed to be taking a very long time.

There was a clatter and clash inside the shed, and the maid emerged with the valise, her face very pale. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I knocked over some tools. It was hard to find in the dark."

Jennie took the valise, glanced at the lighted windows, the area around the house. "Now listen carefully. I want you to tell Miss Rachel there's been a change of plans. Tell her I've persuaded Mr. Reynolds this is too dangerous for him to do himself. We've hired a cab to drive Rachel to the station."

"A cab? But Miss Rachel said—"

"She'll understand. She doesn't want to place him in danger any more than I do. The cabman's name is O'Donnelly, a stocky man who wears a bowler. He'll be waiting at the rear of the bandshell, and he'll drive Rachel to the station. Tell her we'll send the valise on a later train. That way if she's discovered she can tell her father she felt too ill to return to the concert and decided to take a convenient cab home. Without the valise, that might convince him. Can you remember that?"

"I suppose, if that's the way it's to be done."

"That's the way it's to be done." She gave the girl a handful of bills. "That's for the train ticket and anything else Rachel might need. The cab fare has already been taken care of. You're sure she'll go through with it? She's not having second thoughts?"

"Oh, no. She's a mind of her own, Miss Rachel does. If she won't, she won't, and that's the end of it. But if she will, she will, and you may depend on it."

"Good. Now go quickly."

When the girl had disappeared into the dark, Jennie took one last look around, then started with the valise down the drive. All the way to the gate she had to resist the impulse to run, unbearably aware of those lighted windows at her back.

On the trip back to town, she arranged with O'Donnelly to be at the appointed place at the appointed time and explained what he was to do. Then she paid him his price and sank back into the seat, weak with exhaustion. The night air was cool on her face; the small lamps at the ends of the driver's box created a weak pool of light in which she could see the road fleeing past. O'Donnelly's dark bulk in front of her was almost comforting, but she knew the ordeal was not over yet. David would be angry when he learned what she had done. But she would be able to handle that, secure in the knowledge that she had saved his life. And once Rachel was safely away, he would have no real cause to be angry with her. As the cab approached town, she laid her head back

against the seat, seeing a sky alive with stars, trying to let the gentle rhythm of hoofbeats lull her anxiety.

When she entered the restaurant, she saw that David and Willis had finished dinner and were lingering over brandy. They were seated at a corner table, beyond a roomful of murmuring customers. She felt very conspicuous carrying the valise across the room.

David kissed her, relief evident in his smile, and stowed the valise in the corner. "You shouldn't have brought it here," he said.

"There was no place I could leave it."

After greetings had been exchanged, Willis seemed to sense that they wanted to be alone. "Time for me to be off," he said, removing an elegant notecase from his jacket. "No, no, David, let me get it. I consider it a duty to artists less successful than myself."

When Willis was safely out of earshot, talking to the proprietor on the other side of the room, David said, "I thought you'd never come. I was more worried than if I'd gone myself."

"You needn't have been. There was no trouble at all. They're going to the band concert."

"By the lake?"

"Yes. It lasts till ten-thirty, and they plan a late supper in the Henry Hudson afterward. You're to have the buggy waiting on Spring Street, near the back garden entrance to the hotel. At eleven-thirty, Rachel will leave the table pretending to be ill and slip away to meet you. Emily McIver will cover for her. She says she should be out of town before her father even suspects she's missing." Jennie held her breath, hoping this would sound plausible as a plan Rachel might have devised.

"Yes," David said, "if we leave the hotel from the Spring Street entrance at eleven-forty, say, we should just make the eleven-fifty-two train."

Relieved, Jennie relaxed. She hadn't dared tell him what she had arranged with O'Donnelly. He would have refused to let it be done that way, would have insisted on doing it himself.

"David?" It was Willis, reaching across to gather up his hat and cane. "I'll make my goodbyes, if I may. I'm leaving for New York tomorrow. Look me up

any time you're in town. Miss Logan, I hope to see you again." He saluted with his cane and threaded his way through the tables to the door.

David grinned. "This idea of yours, I want you to know, was service above and beyond the call of duty. Jamie Willis is not my idea of a pleasant dinner companion."

"Service in a good cause, though, you must admit."

"I suppose so. Was that Rachel's entire message?"

"Yes, but I told Ames to say you'll take the valise home first and send it on tomorrow. If Hubbard discovers Rachel with you, she might be able to convince him it's just an illicit meeting between friends. The valise would give everything away."

"A good idea. But in that case we'd better go. It's already late."

Outside, streetlamps flickered along the sidewalks. Couples passed arm-in-arm, and there was a constant flow of carriages—the lively stir of a summer resort. The valise stowed in the buggy, David started the mare at a slow walk along the street. Jennie gazed at the passing parade, the slow pace of the carriages, the strolling couples, the Ben Franklin hotel lit up like a giant ship in the night. Inside, she could see chandeliers receding along a seemingly endless ceiling; chamber music drifted through an open window. She was torn between looking and closing her eyes to all this, unable to bear the thought that she might be seeing it for the last time.

"You'll have to leave me near the hotel," she said. "I can't stay. He—he's coming back from New York tonight."

"For once I'm glad," David said. "At least then you'll be out of harm's way."

She laid her head against his shoulder and held tightly to his arm. This was her last attempt to alter the past, her last effort to ensure that Mrs. Bates' story would not come true. The story said she was suspected of killing him; if she was back in her own time when it was to have happened, how could she kill him even accidentally? The story said she was seen leaving the scene of the crime; if she removed her presence, how could the story come true at all?

When they reached the hotel, he halted the buggy across the street from the row of cabs and came around to help her dismount. She slid down into his arms and clung to him, fighting back tears, unwilling to believe that this moment had actually arrived.

Light from the nearest streetlamp flickered through the leaves of the trees overhead; across the street a restless cabhorse stirred and stamped. For one sudden instant everything she could seethe cabmen silhouetted on their boxes against the light from the hotel, the horses waiting patiently in the traces, the soaring spires and gables of the hotel itself—seemed props in a set, a scene from a drama as fleeting and ephemeral as that on any stage, which would cease to exist as soon as she exited into her own time. It was as if she were already withdrawing, already preparing for the possibility she might never return, so that even as she looked everything began to assume the quality of a distant and longed-for memory.

"I don't want you worrying," he said. "By midnight everything will be over. Rachel will be on the train and gone. My responsibilities here will be ended. Can you come tomorrow?"

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak, thinking numbly that tomorrow was a concept she could not envision, that until she knew he was safe the future would not exist for her at all.

"Tomorrow we'll go to your husband," he said. "Together. We'll tell him the truth. After tomorrow I don't want you ever to go away from me again."

She didn't want to think of that now; talk of the future seemed a jinx on the present. "Be careful, David. Please. This is much more dangerous than you believe."

"Don't think about it. Think about tomorrow."

"I love you, David." She pulled him down into one long last kiss, then forced herself to release him and step away, as if finally committing him to the forces she had set in motion.

He mounted to the buggy seat and unwound the reins from the whipstock. Then he clucked to the horse and swung the buggy in a wide circle back the way they had come, lifting his hand in a farewell salute.

She stood at the curb, the streetlamp throwing eerie shadows through the leaves, and watched him recede away, the clip-clop of those hooves she had first heard that day on the road growing ever fainter along the street. She had done everything possible. She had arranged for someone else to steal Rachel away; she had convinced David to take the valise home so that he would not be in town when it happened; she had directed him to a spot at least a mile from the

band concert, nearly two hours after Rachel would be gone; she had removed herself from the scene. But as she watched the buggy disappear beyond the farthest street corner, she could not help thinking that if she was wrong, if she had made some mistake, the man she loved had at most three hours to live.

23

HE HAD NOT BEEN to Fire Island for several years, but little that he could see seemed to have changed. The sun was low in the sky when the boat docked at Fair Harbor, and Michael stepped off with the handful of passengers who for reasons of their own were arriving late on a weekday. He searched the scattering of faces on the dock for sign of Jennie but didn't find her, hadn't really expected to, as she'd said she would take the last ferry home, which didn't leave for more than an hour. The railing along the pier was lined with people, most still in beach garb. He turned left in front of the liquor store, passed the market and the tiny firehouse, and turned up along Holly Walk.

The house seemed deserted. Here, away from the bay, the sun was obscured behind trees; he crossed the cool front deck to the door, which stood open behind the screen. There was no answer to his knock. He looked through the screen and saw into the darkened living room and on through the kitchen and back porch to the rear deck beyond the screened back door. He heard someone moving back there and went around the side deck toward the rear of the house.

A woman he didn't recognize was hanging a blue bikini and a large damp towel over the deck railing when he rounded the corner. She was dressed in a loose terrycloth robe which came to her knees. The deck was still wet around the outside shower.

"Hi," she said. "Looking for Beverly?"

"Actually, I was looking for Jennie. I'm Michael. Michael Logan."

"I'm Norma Levine." She tucked a strand of hair up behind the band around her head and smiled. "Who did you say you were looking for?"

"Jennie Logan. Is she around?"

"Not around here anyway. You sure you got the right house?"

"I think so. Beverly Mott's house?"

"Right house. Wrong person."

"Well, do you know where I can find her?"

"Beverly? She's still on the beach."

"No, I mean Jennie. She's Beverly's houseguest."

The woman laughed. "I'm confused. Either that or you are. I'm Beverly's houseguest."

"You mean Jennie's not here?"

She mimed a kind of amiable helplessness. "I don't even know any Jennie. Maybe you'd better ask Beverly."

His mind went suddenly blank. "How long have you been out here?"

"Beverly's been out here all week. It's her vacation. I came out last night."

"And nobody named Jennie's been here today at all?"

"I'm afraid not. Look, I think you'd better talk to Beverly. You know how to find the beach, don't you?"

"Yes, thanks," he said, and went back out to the walk. It was possible there had been a mix-up in guests, that Jennie had got the date of her invitation wrong and had had to stay with someone else, with Janice Gales, maybe. But surely this woman would have known about it, would at least have known who Jennie was. So where was Jennie? And then it occurred to him: what if she had finally gone off the deep end? What if she was wandering somewhere in the city, half mad, or locked up somewhere with nobody knowing where he was or how to reach him? He mounted the wooden ladderway on the small bluff overlooking the ocean and took the steps two at a time down onto the sand.

The beach was nearly empty. The sea was a pale pink and lavender from the late sun, but the sand was in shadow. One couple lay on a blanket down near the volleyball posts. Beverly stood alone in the surf, in a black tank suit, her back to him, running her feet back and forth in the water. She turned and came back up the slope toward a blanket just above the waterline. He was almost to the blanket when she looked up and saw him.

"Michael," she said. "What are you doing out here?"

"I was going to come out and get Jennie."

She seemed surprised for an instant, then bent nonchalantly to pick up the blanket and shake the sand out of it. "You just missed her. She left a little while

ago, took the four-ten ferry, I think it was." She was not looking at him, holding the blanket by two corners and shaking it out downwind.

"She spent the day with you then?" he said.

"She was here ever since—whenever it was she came out."

"Yesterday. Yesterday morning."

"Yes, that's right. She was here yesterday and today."

"Just you and her?"

"And a friend of mine, Norma. She came out last night." She finished shaking out the blanket and began folding it into squares.

"Why are you lying to me, Beverly?"

She glanced coolly at him, stepped into a pair of beach sandals. "Why would I lie to you?"

"You're lying to me, and I want to know why. I saw your friend Norma. She's never heard of Jennie. She says she and you were out here alone all day. So what are you lying about? What are you covering up?"

A small grin curled the corners of her mouth. "So you found out, huh? I didn't think Jennie could keep that kind of secret."

"What secret? What are you talking about?"

"I'll tell you what," she said. "You stop lying to me, and I'll stop lying to you. You didn't come out here at the end of the day, barely an hour till the last ferry, to lie in the sun with your pretty little wife. Sweet little Jennie. Ha. I didn't think she had it in her, but it serves you right."

"Are you trying to tell me—?"

"You're so stupid, Michael. Jennie hasn't been out here all summer. Sure, she's been waltzing around under your nose with some man she met after you two moved to the country, but not out here. This whole thing was a set-up, to cover for her. And it worked, too, didn't it? All this time you thought your sweet little Jennie was out here nursing her problems."

He went suddenly blind with anger, reached out to seize her arm, and recoiled with the sting of her slap still ringing in his ear.

"Keep your goddamn hands off me," she said.

He found he was trembling, lungs working to bring in air. "Who is it? Tell me who it is, or I'll break your neck."

"She wouldn't tell me. And that's the truth. She just said I should cover for her, say she was coming out here if you asked. She wouldn't tell me who he is or where she met him or anything, but I hope she leaves you flat for him."

"You malicious bitch."

"Hurts, doesn't it? Just remember you did the same to her."

He turned to sprint for the steps leading up off the beach.

All the way back along the boardwalk, her taunt still ringing in his ears, he could see nothing but the image of Jennie coolly, deliberately arranging this deception with Beverly. She had been lying to him, she had been lying to him all this time. It had all been a scheme to cover a real affair, going on in his own time, with a man from his own time. And as he rounded the corner leading to the ferry dock, he could feel flaring up in him all the jealousy and anger he had been suppressing for weeks.

24

BACK AT THE HOUSE, in Chesapequa, Jennie stood in the darkened living room, gazing down across the black void of the lake. It was only thirty minutes since she had returned to her own time and changed out of the dress in the Miller house, but every one of those minutes had seemed endless. On the other side of the lake, through the trees, glittered the lights of town. In the dark, she could imagine it was the Chesapequa of 1899, could imagine what was occurring there right now. She turned away from the windows and went back into the kitchen to look at the clock, a trip that in the last five minutes she had made half a dozen times.

It was 9:45. At this very moment, in 1899, Rachel should be slipping away from the band concert, stealing through the dark to the rear of the band building, where Arthur O'Donnelly was waiting with horse and cab. Where, without her intervention, David would have been. She paused in the middle of the kitchen, as if she could actually sense him here, in the house, in his own century. Please God he was here. He had said he would leave the house at 10:30, to be sure of arriving in time at the hotel; please God he hadn't gone early to check that the Hubbards had made it to the concert. She checked the clock again and started back through the dining room. Anxious, frustrated, her mind alive with all the things that might be going wrong in 1899, she could not stay still, could not stop pacing.

Through the dining-room windows she saw the headlights of a car sweep into the drive. Michael? Only now did it occur to her: she should have stayed and waited in the Miller house. She was in no condition to pretend with Michael. She turned on the light above the front steps, opened the door, and

was surprised to see that it was Mrs. Bates, coming up the walk from her ancient Dodge.

"Did you want something important, Mrs. Bates? I really haven't any time right now."

"Well, I don't want to interrupt, but I thought you'd want to know. You see, it's Aunt Betty. She—"

"Is something wrong?" Jennie felt a flicker of guilt. "She hasn't—?"

"No, no, Aunt Betty's as well as can be expected."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am about yesterday."

"Well, dear, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. You see, it turns out your visit wasn't a failure after all."

"You mean—you've found out something more? About the story?"

"Oh, my, yes, I've made the most exciting find." Mrs. Bates ambled in her awkward gait into the kitchen and took a chair at the table. "I knew you'd want to see it, so I came right over."

"See it?"

"Yes, you see, Aunt Betty kind of came out of her spell tonight. She does that, you know. Sometimes she'll go days without really knowing where she is. Then, times, she'll get like you saw her yesterday, really bad. She has these cycles, Nurse Jenkins calls them—a good spell, then a bad spell."

"The story, Mrs. Bates. What did you learn about the story?"

Mrs. Bates had plumped her large handbag down on the table and was rummaging around in it. "Well, you see, seems like she must have understood us yesterday, bad as she was. You can't tell how much she knows what's going on around her when she's like that. Sometimes, you know, we think old people like that are off somewhere else, but it's just that they can't talk. They can hear you, you see, even if it doesn't seem like it. You don't have something, do you, dear—iced tea, or something? I've got myself so heated up about this."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bates. I don't want to be rude, but I really haven't time to visit. If you'll just tell me what you found out. Please."

"Oh?" Mrs. Bates raised her eyebrows. "Well, I won't stay long then. As I say, Aunt Betty kind of came out of her spell tonight. Got all worked up about an old trunk of hers in the attic. Fairly demanded we bring it down to her room. You know how old people are. Well, she dug around in there and came

up with this old scrapbook." Mrs. Bates had the scrapbook out of the bag now, a red volume no bigger than a diary, and was leafing through it. "The old dear, she should be ashamed of herself. I can't imagine why she withheld it from me all these years, knowing how much I enjoy things about the past. It has pictures of the man you're interested in, David Reynolds, and a newspaper clipping about his death, and everything."

Eagerly, Jennie took the scrapbook, opened to the page Mrs. Bates had found. Pasted inside, brittle and yellowing with age, was the old tattered newspaper clipping.

LOCAL RESIDENT
IS FOUND SLAIN

Chesapequa, Friday, Aug. 30. Mr. David Reynolds, local resident, was found shot and killed by person or persons unknown yesterday evening, on Spring Street near the back garden entrance to the Henry Hudson Hotel. Witnesses returning home from the evening's band concert heard a shot at about 11:30 P.M. and rushing to the scene found Mr. Reynolds lying on the sidewalk dead of a gunshot wound to the chest. Mr. Reynolds' horse had bolted with the buggy and was recovered several blocks away by a bystander. A Mrs. Logan, reportedly a guest at one of the local hotels and Mr. Reynolds' constant companion during recent days, has disappeared and is being sought for questioning. A woman in white—presumably the mysterious Mrs. Logan—was seen fleeing the scene of the crime.

"The pictures are over here," Mrs. Bates said, reaching over to turn the page.

Jennie focused blurred eyes on the photograph on the left-hand page. In faded shades of sepia, David stood beside a high-wheeled buggy, facing the camera, as if caught at a moment of leave-taking. His foot was poised on the running board, one hand holding the reins to a horse out of the picture. He wore the familiar dark vest open over a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up—tall, striking, and handsome, just as she remembered him.

But it was the photograph on the opposite page which took her breath away.

"That's Aunt Betty as a girl," Mrs. Bates said. "Wouldn't they have made a handsome couple? She never told me she knew him, but she must have, don't you think, she must have been in love with him. She never married, you know,

and that must have been the reason—her lover was killed, and she never got over it. Isn't it just too fascinating?"

Jennie was stunned. The photograph was as old and faded as the other. In it, standing full-figure on a little dock under a weeping willow, voluptuous and beautiful beneath a lacy parasol, the expanse of lake in a summer haze behind her, was the Elizabeth she had known in 1899.

Mrs. Bates was talking on, but Jennie didn't hear her. She pressed the scrapbook against her lap to keep it from trembling in her hands. Elizabeth. Beth. Betty. That was Elizabeth! That dying old woman was Elizabeth! She remembered the stringy white hair, the emaciated hands, the feverish eyes burning at her from that haggard face, and with a tremor of awe she thought: she recognized me, in the wandering of her mind she must have thought it was 1899 again and she recognized me. And suddenly she knew why Elizabeth had withheld the scrapbook all those years, why she suppressed the fact that she knew David: she was afraid, afraid the truth would come out. *Elizabeth did it. Elizabeth killed him.* The weeping, the murmuring that she was sorry. Not again, not again. She must have heard from Willis what David said about leaving the hotel for the 11:52 train; she must have thought the valise was mine; she must have believed these were arrangements for my leaving my husband, running away with David. She couldn't bear the thought of being rejected again for another woman.

Slowly, Jennie closed the scrapbook and sank back in the chair. She had sent David to his doom. All along she had believed she was altering the events of 1899 in order to save his life; instead, she was creating the very events that had led to his death. All along she had believed she was being sent back to prevent his murder; instead, she was being sent back to cause it. She had been the one ingredient needed to make it happen.

She opened the scrapbook again, refocused on the article. 11:30 P.M. He had said he would leave the house at 10:30. She looked at the clock on the wall. 10:05. Abruptly, she rose to her feet and thrust the scrapbook back into Mrs. Bates' hands. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Bates, you'll have to leave. I'm in a very great hurry."

"Oh, yes?" Mrs. Bates looked startled. "I'm sorry, I never thought, barging in like this. I hope there's nothing wrong."

"No, no, it's all right, I'm grateful you came, but please hurry. I haven't much time."

Mrs. Bates was stuffing the scrapbook back into her bag. "You will show this to your editor friend, won't you? Why, just the story of the discovery alone —"

"Yes, yes. Now, please, you'll have to forgive me." She took Mrs. Bates by the arm and hurried her back to the front door. "I'll call you tomorrow."

"You're sure there's nothing wrong?"

"Nothing. Please. I'll call you tomorrow."

She closed the door and leaned against it, heart racing, breathless, trying to think. Outside, she heard the car door close, the engine start. She turned and dashed for the stairs. There was still time, time to change into the dress and catch him here, before he left for town. She didn't know what she would say to him, but it wouldn't matter; she had only to hold him here, make it impossible to reach the hotel by 11:30. The past could still be changed, the story could still be proved wrong. Upstairs, she burst into the bedroom, flicked on the light, and threw open the wardrobe closet.

The dress wasn't there.

She seized an armful of clothes, wrenched them aside, thrashed her way through the remaining hangers. No dress. Then she remembered: it was still in the suitcase, in the car, where she had left it after returning from the Miller house.

She slammed the closet door, snatched off the light, and raced out of the bedroom. She almost tripped at the top of the stairwell; catching herself on the railing, she plunged down the stairs and out into the night. The suitcase was in the back seat of the Volkswagen; she wrenched open the door, shoved the seat back forward. She was just lifting the suitcase out when Michael's car wheeled into the driveway and came to a gravel-grinding stop beside her.

He was out of the car before she could move.

"Where have you been?"

"Michael, I can't talk, I'm in a hurry."

"I bet you are. I just came back from Fire Island. Beverly told me everything. How you've never spent one day there, how you're having an affair. You've been lying to me all this time. Now where have you *been*?"

She wanted to weep. “Michael, I told you everything last night. It’s him, Michael, it’s David, he’s going to die unless I can get to him. Please, Michael, please . . .”

“Stop *lying* to me,” he said, and grabbed for her arm.

Instinctively, she swung the suitcase between them. It struck the inside of his thigh, and he grappled for her hands, the handle, and—failing that—gripped it by both corners and tried to wrestle it away. There was a snap, and the suitcase fell open, and the long white dress spilled out on the ground. It was the only thing in the suitcase.

She snatched it up and clutched it to her, the open suitcase dangling forgotten from her other hand.

“That dress,” he said, staring at it. “You haven’t worn that dress since . . .” Slowly, he focused on her face and began advancing toward her, backing her away. “It’s the dress, isn’t it? The first time it happened was when you tried on the dress. You were wearing the dress that day on the road. And when that man brought you back from the lake. It is true, isn’t it? You are going back into the past. You are having an affair with him.”

She backed away toward the house, clutching the dress with one hand, holding the suitcase, lid dragging, between them with the other. The look on his face was frightening. She felt hypnotized; she couldn’t speak, could only keep retreating, using the suitcase as a shield, toward the light from the door behind her.

“Every time you want to go to him you put on the dress, don’t you?” he said, talking softly, hypnotically, inching ominously toward her. “That’s how you do it, isn’t it? You didn’t tell me that, did you, when you were being such a good girl last night? You didn’t want me to know that, did you, you didn’t really want me to know the truth. You didn’t want me to know what the dress was for.” And suddenly he lunged for her. “I’m going to burn that dress.”

“No!”

Abruptly, she seemed released from her spell. She dropped the suitcase and ran for the house, hearing him swear behind her. Over her shoulder she saw that in trying to pursue her he had stepped into the suitcase; the lid had banged up against his knee; he was down and scrambling to his feet. She slammed the door behind her, frantically fumbled the lock into place just as

she felt him turning the knob; as she started up the stairs she caught a flash of him running past the dining-room windows toward the kitchen door. She scrambled up the stairs and ran along the hall, heart pounding, lungs sucking air; as she slammed and locked the bedroom door behind her, she heard his footsteps racing through the dining room, starting up the stairs. The clock beside the bed said 10:27. Hurriedly, she kicked off her shoes and began stripping off her blouse, hearing him pounding on the door now, shouting, "Jennie? Jennie?" Stripped, she snatched up the dress, slipped into it, frantically trying, elbows akimbo, to button up the buttons, all those buttons, her heart rattling like a kettle drum, her mind a blank, a one-note plea: *no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no . . .*

• • •

Outside in the hall, Michael hurled himself against the door. Again. Again. He lifted one foot and kicked against it near the lock, but it was too solid, no give. Almost blinded by frustration, he turned and braced himself against the opposite wall for leverage, but then his foot wouldn't reach the door. Swearing, he wheeled, saw the buffet down the hall, ran to it, seized it, began shoving it along the floor. One leg snagged in the runner rug. He tilted the buffet and ripped the rug out from underneath, pulled it back beyond the door, then ran back to shove the buffet along the hall again until it was even with the door. Then, half-sitting on it, bracing his hands on the edge of the top, he reared and lunged and kicked with both feet at the door, again, and again; and then, feeling it begin to give, he hurled himself off the buffet against it, felt it break open, sending him inward, tumbling to the floor.

He scrambled to his feet. "Jennie? Jennie?"

For one blind second in the dark he thought the room was empty. Then he flicked on the light and saw her lying on the bed, wearing the dress. She was very still. He stepped to the bed, awe-struck, afraid, seeing the hands folded across her breast.

His heart in his throat, he whispered, "Jennie?"

She didn't answer. She didn't move.

He reached down and touched her shoulder. "Jennie?"

She didn't answer.

In sudden panic, he said, "Jennie?" and shook her by the shoulder and stared with slow horror as one hand slid slowly off her breast and flopped lifelessly down at her side. Terrible dread congealed his heart. He heard Dr. Salzman's words—*I don't want to alarm you, but the human mind is capable of willing itself to die*—and, moving as if in slow motion, he picked up her wrist and felt for her pulse, but beneath the touch of his fingers there was only inert, lifeless flesh: no pulse, no tremor, nothing but the warm and waxen clay.

25

IT WAS A VERY GRAY day. A faint wind flapped and rustled in the canopy over the grave. Michael sat on a metal folding chair in a row of chairs just under the edge of the canopy. He sensed Don's firm bulk in the chair beside him. Through blurred eyes, over the top of the wreath-covered coffin, he could see the line of twisted black trees along the crest of the hill, where the older part of the cemetery fronted the road. At the edge of the artificial turf, the minister murmured in hushed tones with one of the attendants from the funeral home. Behind him he heard another attendant guiding people into a row of chairs—hushed whispers, muffled shuffle of feet. In the chair at the end of the row, he saw Beverly dabbing with a Kleenex at her eyes.

He looked at the coffin lying mute and still on the device above the grave. Its gleaming chrome and plastic was like an affront to his eyes. Jennie had hated chrome and plastic, would have preferred the natural warmth of wood. But he had been too upset to make any arrangements, had left everything to Don and Beverly. It was hard to believe that Jennie was in that box, cold in the icy grip of death. I killed her, he thought. I let my stupid jealousy make me believe for one insane instant that the story could be true, that she could actually be deceiving me with a man dead almost a hundred years. Poor sick Jennie.

The minister stepped to the front of the chairs, a man at least without the practiced ooze of his profession, with the honesty to show in his face that he was a stranger here, providing what little he could. He bowed his head and gave a mercifully short prayer. Then he opened his Bible, glanced over the rows of chairs, and began to read. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till

thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. . . . "

Michael let the words fall unheeded on his ear, through the reading and the short and expected speech afterward, the minister working to give shape and meaning to a brief life he had not witnessed but had only been told about. He was surprised when the words stopped and the minister stepped abruptly aside. He heard movement behind him, a cough, a muted whisper, the creak of metal chairs as the crowd began to rise. Don shifted in the chair beside him, took his arm.

Michael looked around. "Is that all? Is it over?"

"Yeah," Don said, "that's it."

Michael stood and with blurred eyes approached the coffin. He sensed the crowd shifting and moving behind him, felt their eyes on his back. The coffin seemed bulky and heavy, much too large for the Jennie he remembered, lying slight and slim in her white dress inside. He swallowed hard and turned to Don.

"Don't they lower the coffin in? I thought we'd see them lower the coffin in."

"No, Mike, that's not done anymore. They do that afterward."

Michael put his hand on the coffin; it was cold and hard under his palm. The wind rattled the fringes of the canopy overhead. Through swimming eyes he saw the black of the trees twisted against the gray of the sky. In a surge of grief, he bent to kiss the coffin. "Goodbye, Jennie," he said, and allowed himself to be led away.

The minister shook his hand, said words he did not retain. He moved numbly through the crowd—people from town, friends from the city—shaking here and there a hand, dimly aware of hushed words and strained faces. Then they shifted, began to eddy away, drifting up the slight slope to where the cars lined the road. He felt Don take his arm, and together they started up the hill after the others. Stumbling across the manicured grass toward that line of black trees, he thought: That's not done anymore. No ceremonial handful of dirt, no watching the first shovelfuls fall, no real goodbyes. Just walk away and leave her lying in the barren air, cold in her

chrome and plastic bed, uncomforted by the warm earth. There is no warmth in modern life, she had said. And in this case she was right.

They were under the trees now, in the old part of the cemetery, approaching the road and the hearse and the row of parked cars. He felt Don hesitate and stop beside him.

Don said, "Isn't that—?"

"What, Don?"

"No, never mind, Mike. Let's go."

He wiped his eyes so that he could see. The slope was studded with old and weathered gravestones, ghostly white in the dark gray day. At his feet, where Don had halted him, stood an old marble slab cracked and covered with moss. Slowly he focused on the words chiseled in its face:

DAVID REYNOLDS
1868-1899
By An Unknown Hand

Beside it, leaning slightly in the decay of age, was a smaller, similar stone:

PAMELA REYNOLDS
1874-1899
Beloved Wife

He felt Don tug at his arm, allowed himself to be drawn away. Up ahead of them the crowd had reached the road. Car doors were opened and closed; from here and there came the quick squeal of an ignition and the sound of a motor coming to life. Slowly he mounted toward the crest of the slope, hazy-eyed once more, his every step ringing the words in his mind: *beloved wife . . . beloved wife . . . beloved wife . . .*

26

IT WAS A WEEK before he felt like seeing anyone again. He called Don then and arranged to stay in Don's apartment until he found a place of his own in the city. Don came out to help the day the movers came. It was a clear bright afternoon. He sat with Don around the table on the patio, the ice tinkling in his glass. It was the first time he had trusted himself to drink all week. In the house, he heard the scrape and bump of the moving crew carrying furniture to the big van at the front door.

"You sure you're doing the right thing, moving back to the city?" Don said. "You haven't even sold the house yet."

"It'll be sold. I've got it listed with every real estate agent around. I couldn't live here anymore, Don."

"Sure, I understand that."

A faint breeze whispered through the flower bed in the center of the drive; from the woods along Summer House Road came the call of a dove. "Jennie loved this place so much—I can't bear to look at it anymore. Even the trees seem to be accusing me. When I think what it meant to her, and that if I'd . . . if I hadn't—"

"You've got to stop thinking that way, Mike. You've got to stop blaming yourself. Jennie was a very sick girl."

"I know, I know."

"I mean, maybe it's better this way. Better than having her locked away in an institution, living permanently in a fantasy world, totally insane. Could you have lived with that? I mean, the psychiatrist said it—she wanted to die. Oh, sure, the doctors can call it a heart attack, but you and I know she wanted to die. She had a better world to go to, like the preacher said, and she chose to go.

I mean, we all choose to die, ultimately. For some it comes early, for most it comes late, but we all die when we decide death is preferable to living. We give up the ghost. Stop blaming yourself, Mike. Jennie's happy now."

Michael listened to that soothing rhythmic voice—the voice of calm reason, relating the incomprehensible. He's doing his best to believe it, he thought. Old cynical Don, he's trying to believe it for my sake.

"I wish I knew you were right." He jostled the ice cubes in his glass, watching the sunlight diffuse through the liquor. "You know, Jennie said something about the whole thing being a test. It was the last night we talked together. Looking back now I think we were closer that night than we'd ever been before, strange as that may seem, strange as she was then. But she said something about it all being a test, and her destiny depending on whether she passed it. And, you know, since the funeral, every now and then I catch myself thinking, what if it was all true? Everything she said. Maybe it was all true, only maybe it was me being tested. I didn't believe, and I didn't love her enough to let her go. And if I'd let her go maybe she could have saved him and she wouldn't have died. Sometimes I think that. Maybe I was the one being tested, and I failed the test."

"Well, Mike, you start off thinking things like that, you never know where you'll end up. I think you need another drink."

"Mr. Logan?" It was the foreman of the moving crew, coming across the patio, removing his gloves. "Sorry to bother you. I just wondered what you want done with those old paintings up in the attic. They're just sitting there. You're either gonna have to take 'em out of those frames and roll 'em up, or they're gonna have to be crated. And we got nothing to crate 'em up with. Nobody said anything about crating any paintings up."

"What paintings?" Numbly, Michael stood up from the chair. "There aren't any paintings in the attic."

"Well, I don't mean to argue, but there is. Several of 'em. Up there in that unfinished part of the attic."

Don's eyebrows raised. "Maybe they weren't all lost after all. Maybe the fella hid 'em. You could be rich, Mike."

The foreman led them back into the house, the rooms looking bare and alien without furniture. "One of my men found 'em," he said as they mounted

the stairs to the attic. “I took ’em in that room there with the skylight to get a look at ’em, but he found ’em back in that unfinished part under the eaves. Looks like they been there a long time, look old as hell. Maybe you never knew they was there.”

The attic studio stood bleak and empty under the slanted ceilings. Their footsteps seemed to echo across the bare floor. Hesitantly, Michael knelt in front of the large luminous skylight, where the paintings had been neatly stacked. They looked very old—dusty and covered with cobwebs. He brushed the cobwebs from the one on top and leaned it up against the wall. It was a painting of a young woman leaning back against some sort of railing, behind her a seemingly endless expanse of glittering water churned into waves by the wind. She wore a lacy white high-collared dress, her burnished gold hair up atop her head.

He felt his heart begin to race. “Jennie,” he said, “that’s Jennie.”

“No, Mike,” Don said, “it can’t be. You’re just upset. It must be his wife, and he stashed these paintings up here. You know Jennie said his wife looked a lot like her.”

“Don, that’s Jennie. That pendant, Don, that’s Jennie’s pendant. I gave her that pendant no more than three weeks ago.”

Suspended from the woman’s neck, on a slim chain, was a pendant shaped like a butterfly, in a filigree of gold, with multi-colored enameled wings.

27

HE HAD FORCED the others to leave the attic. Downstairs, he heard Don talking to the movers, footsteps crossing the kitchen, the slam of the door. Alone now, he sat on the floor, the drink still in his hand, the paintings leaning in a row against the wall. So you beat me, he thought; it was true all along, David Reynolds, I was competing with you, and you beat me.

One by one, he looked at the paintings lined up in front of him: Jennie sitting surrounded by the folds of her dress on a blanket bearing wine bottles and a picnic basket, on a beach somewhere with a line of blue ocean and a boardwalk and the blurred forms of bathers in the background; Jennie walking along a boardwalk, under a parasol, the wind off the sea whipping at her dress and sending the thin clouds racing across the blue of the sky; Jennie in a dimly shuttered room, holding a baby to her breast; Jennie growing older, surrounded by children. His eyes came to rest on a portrait of Jennie in middle age, her eyes looking somewhere over his left shoulder, beyond him, her face with a mature, peaceful expression he had never seen, the face of a serene, middle-aged Jennie he would never know; and with a swell of pain about his heart he heard her voice in his mind: *a theory that people who die naturally, of old age, pass on to a higher level of existence, but people who die young pass on to a world just like this one so they can fulfill the purpose of this incarnation.*

He picked up that first painting, looked with wonder at Jennie poised against what he now recognized as a ship-railing, somewhere in mid-ocean. So you did it, he thought. You did what you had to do—you died so that you could go and join him, wherever he'd been taken. And somehow you sent me these paintings so that I would know. I'm glad, Jennie. I'm glad it's true, I'm glad you joined him, I'm glad you were happy; feeling the emotion—sadness,

happiness, he wasn't sure—breaking in his throat. But where did you live, Jennie? Your David actually died in 1899. It's been less than a week since I buried you. And yet you were together and you both lived. Where did you live, Jennie? On what level of existence did you live, and how much else is there about this life, this world, that we don't know, that we don't understand?

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